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THE WORKS

OF

THE REV. DANIEL M'CALLA, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT OR CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, IN THE PARISH OF CHRIST'S CHURCH, SOUTH-CAROLINA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A FUNERAL DISCOURSE,

CONTAINING A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR, BY THE REV. WILLIAM HOLLINSHEAD, D. D.

VOL. I.

CHARLESTON, (S. C.)

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1810.

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BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the twenty-third day of November, in the thirty-fifth year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D 1810, Dr John R. Witherspoon, of the said District, has deposited in this office the title of a book the right whereof he claims as editor and proprietor, in the words following, to wit—

"The Works of the Rev Daniel M'Calla, D D Pastor of the Inde-
"pendent or Congregational Church, in the Parish of Christ's Church,
"in South-Carolina. In Two Volumes. To which is prefixed a Fu-
"neral Discourse, containing a sketch of the Life and Character of
"the Author, by the Rev. William Hollinshead, D. D."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, intituled, "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned." And also to the act, entitled, "An act supplementary to an act, entitled, 'An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the time therein mentioned,' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

JAMES JERVEY,
Clerk of the district of South-Carolina.

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THE REV. DANIEL M'CALLA, D. D.

LATE PASTOR OF

THE INDEPENDENT OR CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

IN THE

PARISH OF CHRIST's CHURCH, (S. C.)

DELIVERED ON THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF MAY, 1809.

BY THE Rev. WILLIAM HOLLINSHEAD, D.D.
One of the Pastors of the Independent or Congregational Church in Charleston.

ZECHARIAH, i. 5.

"*Your Fathers, where are they? And the Prophets, do they live forever?*"

THE fashion of this world passeth away: Like a vast theatre, its scenery is perpetually changing—One generation of men cometh on the stage after another: Every individual performs his part and makes his exit, and is seen no more. Melancholy reflection! We look back upon the years that are past, with regret, for those who filled their station with propriety; who were among the virtuous, the honorable, and the good in their day. They are gone down to the chambers of the dead; they have ceased from their labors and their prayers, from their works of piety and benevolence, and from all their schemes of usefulness in the world. We have lost the benefit of their influence, their living example, and their personal instruction. "Your Fathers, where are they? And the Prophets, do they live forever?

On such subjects as these, the mind naturally dwells, in the awful crisis of bereavement, when a holy Providence demands the surrender of our friends to his wise determinations. There is a propriety in considering them with attention, especially in the hour consecrated to the remembrance of departed excellence. If we improve them as we ought, we may derive from them, many useful lessons of instruction.

It is not necessary on this occasion, to expatiate on the particular intention of the prophet, in pronouncing the words of our text: They propose to our consideration;—The transitory state of human life on earth, in the most forcible language—they urge upon our reason and conscience, the importance of sedulously employing the short period of our existence in the present world, in humble obedience to the will of God—they lead back our steps to retrace the path of those who have accomplished the course of warfare and duty, in which we are still to be engaged—they carry forth our meditations to that untried state of being, which is veiled from the eye of mortals in impenetrable mystery—And in these respects, we may advantageously accommodate them to the purposes of the present service.

Permit me with dependence on divine aid, and with solemn impressions of the interesting circumstances of the occasion, to make the attempt—

First.—"Your Fathers, where are they?"

The question seems intended to fix our attention to the consideration of the short and transitory state of human life on earth. The subject is familiar indeed to every mind; but the sad and gloomy impression which it ever makes on the heart, presents it to us in an aspect uncomfortable and forbidding.

To contemplate our enjoyments as already fleeting and beginning to pass away, awakens a mixture of sorrow and apprehension, too painful to be cherished. To look back upon valuable possessions, and affectionate relatives who have glided from us by the lapse of time; to recollect, "I had a father, a husband, a child," is a task at which nature trembles and recoils.

The text, however, and the occasion summon us to the painful important duty, while at the same time they raise up to our view the cloud of witnesses who have trod the ground before us; open the dark repositories of the dead, and disclose, in mouldering silence, the grave without any order.

Considered in this view, the subject is highly interesting and important. It reads an emphatic lecture on the vanity of our expectations from human strength and wisdom. It seems to say, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; his life is even as a vapor that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away."

If we go back indeed into the remoter periods of time, a few only of the most prominent characters can be recollected—the rest are lost in

obscurity; their very names are buried in oblivion; and whatever they were in their day and in the eyes of their co-temporaries, history has passed them by, and to us they are as though they never existed—their influence in society, their usefulness, their wealth and honor and achievments are forgotten, and all the consequence and importance attached to them have perished from the remembrance of man.

When we see our forefathers thus vanished as a shadow, human greatness and human importance diminish to a point—Is this the fame for which heroes have contended? Is this the celebrity for which men of letters have exhausted their strength in study? And are these the men, whose memory is blotted from the records of time: on whom such dependence was placed in their day; who were consulted as the oracles of wisdom, and contemplated as the patterns of excellency? Where now are even the monuments of their enterprize, their industry, or their sagacity? We need not go back to Nineveh, and Babylon, and Tyre, to learn the incompetency of human power and skill to perpetuate the works of genius or art. We need not resort to the blood-stained theatre of modern revolution, to witness the swift destruction that often overwhelms both men and their improvements together. It is not only in the camps of war, nor in the decay of palaces or falling towers, that we perceive the frailty of the works of man. The silent, deliberate hand of time, imperceptibly draws the curtain that hides from recollection most of the events even of a few past years.

The inference from this melancholy reflection is, not that we should lightly esteem either the virtues or the labors of good men; but that we ought not to rate them above their real importance. They are entitled to our gratitude and respect for the good that they intend; for their manly efforts, and their perseverance while they live: but we calculate too highly when we place unlimited confidence in them, or expect from them benefits of permanent utility. No—While we behold the best and most useful men descending to the grave, it admonishes us to trust chiefly in God; to consider the instrument endued and strengthened by Omnipotence for the duties to which he is commissioned, to esteem him highly for his works' sake; but to ascribe the praise supremely to the Lord.

From such reflections, how much is our own consequence and importance diminished! We have succeeded to our fathers: in a little while the station which we occupy at present will have fallen to

others, who will either perfect the schemes we are engaged in, or disapprove and abandon them forever.

Wherefore then do we think highly of ourselves or of the little we can accomplish, in so precarious a condition, of so short a date! Boast not, O man! of thy works, or thy prospects; of thy possessions, or thy fame. Boast not even of to-morrow, which may never arrive to thee; or if it doth, may come to blast thine expectations, and disappoint thy most favorite wishes; to displace thee from the earth, and bestow thine honors and advantages on another.

Secondly.—In another view of the subject, it urges the importance of sedulously employing the short period of our existence in the present world, in humble obedience to the will of God.

The longest life of man on earth is comparatively transient and momentary. But this short, evanescent period, is appointed for duties of infinite importance. It is emphatically styled a day; and an everlasting night succeeds it, in which no unfinished undertaking can be resumed, no errors persisted in till then, can be rectified, no pardons for unrepented disobedience can be obtained. Considering mankind as a race of moral accountable beings, this is the only season of probation and preparation for a better state hereafter. Viewing human nature as involved in apostacy, depravity, and guilt, it is the only opportunity for repentance and amendment, for recovering the lost image of our Maker, for attaining and improving in the virtues which alone can refine and dignify our nature.

And all this must necessarily be accomplished, and that speedily, if we would enjoy the hope of divine approbation and a blissful immortality.

Many arguments conspire to enforce the importance of attending seasonably to this consideration. We learn it from the irreversible law of our condition as the creatures of God. Every faculty of our nature preaches a strong obligation to improve our existence for his glory in whom we live and move and have our being; reason and conscience inculcate the duty with great emphasis: the influence of a general prevalence of virtue in promoting the order and happiness of society, and the genuine satisfactions of a life of piety and goodness place it in a most impressive and interesting point of light. The sacred Scriptures also abound with arguments to the same purpose; and demand our attention to them in the most peremptory manner; they direct the consecration of our souls to the service of God, and enjoin

an explicit unreserved submission of heart to his will; they require a purity and rectitude of character which must be maintained with steadfast activity to the end, and a fervent energetic piety which must be supported by unabating exertion, if we would live to answer the end of our being, or enjoy the hope of a happy future state.

Every rational reflecting mind will perceive from these considerations, how infinitely interesting and important the duties of the present day of our existence must be! A boundless field of usefulness opens to our view—A scene of activity invites our exertion which has respect to all our obligations to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves—Not a chasm remains in all the years of our mortality that is not occupied by some important circumstance, that demands our immediate attention—Not a moment escapes from the days of our life that is not charged with some interesting duty that enhances its value.

But all these considerations acquire additional force when viewed in connection with the frail and scanty date of our time on earth, or joined with the recollection of the venerable dead. Let us learn the lesson, my Brethren, at the cemetery of our fathers. These breathless bodies, these disjointed bones, these putrid fragments, this dust and ashes, are not spread before you to open afresh the springs of sorrow which time was beginning to dry up: not to expose the vanity of our glory and excellency in our vigor and prime; but to remind you of the duties which time demands of you, and of the importance of seasonably applying to them.

Lo! a voice is addressing you from the tomb! It seems to say in awful accents, "We, our friends, were once as ye are, when we enjoyed the light, were employed in duty, and looked forth to flattering prospects of futurity—Our day is past—The night of death has closed the scene till the morning of the resurrection. Consider—O consider how shortly you may expect to lie down with us in these mansions of corruption! Address yourselves with diligence to the great important duties of your day! Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave to which you are hastening. Your opportunity,—your only opportunity for making your calling and election sure; for doing good to others, or acquiring improvement to yourselves, is hourly drawing nearer to a close. Watch then and be sober. Be ye therefore ready also, for at such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

Thirdly.—The question, "Your fathers, where are they?" leads back our thoughts, to retrace the steps of those who have gone before us, through the duties and warfare, in which we are still to be engaged.

It is painful, in reviewing the scenes of human life, to witness how many rational creatures spend an useless existence on earth; whose history may be summed up in this, that they were born, and breathed, and died. It is mortifying to know what multitudes pervert the ends of life, to the abuse of reason and the disgrace of being; in scenes of folly and intemperance; in acts of violence and fraud, and riot and sensuality.

The infatuation, pride, and wickedness that reign in the courts of Avarice, and Pleasure, and Ambition, present an affecting and degrading view of human nature, from which we turn with pity, with humiliation and disgust.

But the men we contemplate, were among the excellent of the earth; the ornaments and the strength of society in their day. Your fathers (I mean the founders and the patrons of this church) were generally the sons of piety and religion. From their earliest settlement in this country, before the wilderness was subdued, or the ruthless savage had retired from these shores, it was their care to provide for the public social worship of God, and to transmit the doctrines of truth in one pure stream to their posterity, from generation to generation.

The grand impression they had of the power of the gospel, on their own hearts, taught them the importance of preserving it pure and entire to their children, and inspired them with fortitude to encounter many difficulties for its sake. Animated by the sentiments of pure and undefiled religion, correct in their manners, useful in society, and exemplary in piety and goodness, they shone as lights in the world, and in the midst of temporal inconveniences and discouragements, maintained a zeal for God, which did honor to the integrity of their hearts, and the sincerity of their profession. To their firmness and perseverance you are indebted for your prosperity in your temporal interests and in your spiritual; for your standing amongst the churches of Christ, and the correctness of your religious sentiments. They fought a good fight, they have finished their course; they have left you an example worthy of attention and imitation. Your blessings and your privileges are the fruit of their exertions. They cheerfully encountered the severities of a noxious cli-

mate, without a knowledge of its proper antidotes, and submitted to a self-denying, distinguishing profession, that they might preserve to you the liberty of conscience, and the advantages of orthodox instruction in the faith of the gospel.

These benefits have descended to us unimpaired. And permit me to say, they convey to you the sentiments of your progenitors in a manner too explicit not to be understood, too emphatical not to arrest our attention!

Worthy men! Why did they labor and wrestle, and strive incessantly, till they raised a house for God, and established a Church and a Ministry on the principles of eternal truth! Why were they so solicitous to be instructed in those peculiar doctrines of the New Testament, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ? Why were they so studious of the Scriptures, pondering them in the secret retirement of the closet, reading them diligently in their families, impressing on their children and their households, the great duties they inculcate, and mixing all with fervent prayer, that they might become a word of salvation to their souls, the law of their life, and the foundation of their hope? It was that they verily believed them to be the words of eternal life: They had felt their sacred energy—they had experienced their salutary light and influence, in guiding their feet into ways of righteousness and peace; they knew them to be the wisdom of God, and the power of God to salvation to them that believe.

Consider the beauty, the energy, the excellency of this respectable impressive example. It enjoins upon you to "search the Scriptures, in which ye think ye have eternal life." It demands of you to "Consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling yourselves together, as the manner of some is." It reminds you of your strong obligation to teach the rising generation, and to impress them with the saving truths of the gospel, that they may succeed to your place, when you shall have gone down to the grave. It recommends to your peculiar care, the Church of God, which in his providence is committed to your oversight; that the light so long burning in it, so often apparently subsiding and reviving, may never be extinguished. "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Which carries forth our thoughts in the

Next place, to that world of spirits, unseen to mortal eyes, which finishes the career of our probation, and fixes our character and condition for eternity.

We have seen the ravages of death and the gloomy caverns of the grave. Beyond them lies a prospect which stamps infinite importance upon our life and proceedings in the body—Even in this imperfect clouded state, the soul pants for immortality, and looks forth from the windows of her clay-built tabernacle, for an existence, more suited to her vast desires and extensive capacities. We know that to the eye of reason, this subject is covered with mystery. But Christianity turns aside the veil of uncertainty, and points out to us an hereafter—a wide eternity of rewards and punishments, and we either look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, or expect the fearful judgment of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. So soon as we drop this mortal flesh, the spirit perfect in all its habits of piety and goodness, or of impenitency and sin, prepared for an inheritance with the saints in glory, or fitted for destruction, enters into the state adapted to its condition. What a difference of prospect do these considerations open to the different characters and dispositions of men! Behold *him*, whose days are passing in prosperity and ease; to whom full tides of joy, without embarrassment flow incessantly; whose table, spread with luxury, and his coffers filled with wealth, court indulgence, and flatter his vanity and pride: But he hath forgotten God; lives a stranger to the sentiments of piety; unmoved by the sweet influences of gospel truth, unfeeling to the grace that preaches salvation and invites his attention to his immortal interests, insensible to the ingenuous pleasures that attend a course of virtue and religion, without hope of blessedness in heaven and careless of futurity. Let conscience be awakened to take cognizance of his condition; to spread before him the guilt of an impenitent, unbelieving life; to uncover the dark abodes of the ungodly after death; and say in his affrighted ear, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee!" Trembling and astonished—too late filled with horror and confusion, he looks around, but looks in vain, for comfort or for hope, on the possessions and the friends on whom he used to rely. Nothing can mitigate the anguish of his soul! Before him lies an unknown, untried eternity; but to him an eternity of unavailing repentance, and incurable despair; an eternity of encreasing guilt, and encreasing torment—But I forbear.

"Mark the perfect man and behold the upright!" Calm—submissive—satisfied with the government of providence—with the vicissitudes through which he has passed, in all his pilgrimage of labor and difficulty, of temptation and infirmity, perhaps of disaster and affliction—and animated by the grace of God, he hath met his trials with a dignified composure, he has maintained his steadfastness with firmness, and lived uniformly a life of faith in the Son of God. He arrives at the close of his warfare, cheered with the smile of Heaven—conscious of an unfeigned conformity to the will of God, of a mind formed on the principles of the gospel, and framed for the enjoyment of celestial pleasures, he is not afraid to die. The recollection of a life of faith and patience, and the fear of God, a firm persuasion of his interest in the approving grace of Heaven, and a confident expectation of final admission, through the merits of his Saviour, into glory, have disarmed death of his terrors; and with pleasure he welcomes the moment of dissolution, as the best and happiest of his existence. Well he remembers, it is true, and he acknowledges the truth with humiliation, that once he walked according to the course of this world, and was subject to the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience: He recollects with sorrowful emotion, also, his numerous imperfections, since his first entrance on a Christian course, and feels how justly he might often have been condemned, even in his correctest days, for sin and folly. But he recollects with no less impression, the mighty change that passed on him, when the word of life became effectual in turning him from the error of his ways, in reconciling him to the purposes of grace, and transforming him into the image of Christ. He reviews with gratitude the instances of his recovery, and re-establishment, when he had wandered out of the way, and of seasonable comfort and support, when his soul was almost sinking. He can say with truth, even in a dying hour; "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me." With what pleasure may a good man in these circumstances, anticipate the joys of a future state!

It is no doubtful conjecture, with him, whether an eternity of happiness is prepared for the godly. The Scriptures have authorised him to say; "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." His faith has taught him long to consider Jesus the great high priest of his profession, as already passed into glory: And already possessing the kingdom prepared

for his saints, from before the foundation of the world! Cheering thought! It has often raised his drooping spirits in this thorny valley, and reinspired his courage in the most feeble hours of despondency. It sooths him now in his last conflict, in directing his eye to scenes of interminable bliss, into which he is sure to enter, whenever he takes a final leave of mortality.

Human conception falls infinitely short of the felicity of heaven. The veil is sufficiently turned aside however, to inspire our hope, to awaken our activity, or to reanimate our faultering courage, in the season of deepest, depression.

To attain to an immortality of purity and perfection, to be admitted into the immediate presence of infinite majesty, and numbered with the general assembly of the first born above, to join the immortal throng that surrounds the throne of heaven, with unceasing praises, and with celestial rapture cast their crowns at the feet of the Redeemer, form the imperfect representations of the bliss of saints in glory. On earth they performed the parts assigned them by infinite wisdom; either they passed their course in the valley of humiliation, or rose to stations of eminence and dignity; they explored the fields of science and shone with burning lustre the lights of human nature; or with babes and sucklings in respect to mortal wisdom, have only been instructed to know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. In every condition, they have experienced their conflicts with flesh and blood, and principalities and powers, and have obtained the victory. From every condition, having washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, they have ascended to seats in paradise, are enthroned with Jesus and join the seraphic song—Amen, Hallelujah! Glory to God, and to him that hath redeemed us by his blood.

Among them, permit me to say, without waiting at present for other application, I think I behold the men, your worthy ancestors, and your cotemporaries who lived and died in the faith of the Son of God. Adorned, improved, ennobled by the graces of Christianity, rich in works of piety and goodness, happy instruments of promoting the kingdom of God in their day, and according to their station, of turning many to righteousness, they shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever. Blessed souls! With what pleasure have they assembled on those shores of immortality! Kindred in temper, in joys, in interests and pursuits, what raptures expand their bosoms, and lighten up their countenances, while they

look back upon the path through which they ascended to these realms of day, and recount the wonders of that grace which wrought effectually in them, in preparing them and bringing them to glory! The mysteries of inexplicable providence, that formerly obscured the sunshine of their pilgrimage, and sometimes wrung their hearts with sorrow, now lie before them transparent and resplendent. The solicitous inquiry, the anxious wish to interpret the will of heaven, in his unsearchable proceedings are now perfectly satisfied. They know now, wherefore it was needful for them to experience affliction and the cross in a state of trial. They perceive the benefits in which all things have issued; and adore the wisdom, which in most intricate circumstances, "Led them by a right way to a city of habitation, whose maker and builder is God."

Among these happy circles is admitted to his reward, the excellent and worthy man, whom on this occasion we are called to mourn. He shone on earth with distinguished eminence among the faithful servants of Christ—Some of those who from this place passed into glory before him, were the fruits of his ministry—They have hailed him welcome to the blissful seats in heaven where every virtue is perfected and crowned. "This is the man, they testify, the chosen instrument, whose doctrines first impressed our hearts, and taught us the way to God—This is the man whose fervent prayers were answered in our conversion—whose luminous example, pathetic instructions, and skilful application of the word of God, inspired our hearts with the love of Jesus, confirmed our fortitude, comforted us on the way and pointed our feet in the road to heaven."

From these considerations, my brethren, let us derive our consolation! I feel with pungency the stroke that has divided from me the companion of my youth, the partner in my early studies, and the friend of my heart. You cannot overrate his worth as a faithful and able steward of the mysteries of God to you. We shall see his face, and enjoy his usefulness no more. He is gone however to receive his reward—His soul has passed into glory—His flesh shall only rest in the grave, till the morning of the resurrection. Let us be ready also, and we shall meet him again where hallowed friendship burns, with unvarying perpetual flame, and death and disappointment never enter.

In the mean time, it is a tribute of respect justly due to his merit, and to your affection for him, to dedicate a moment to the commemoration of his virtues.

Dr. M'Calla was born at Neshaminy, in Pennsylvania, on the 11th of July, 1748. Blessed with most excellent and pious parents, he was early instructed by them in the principles of the Christian Religion, and attended on this species of instruction, with uncommon expansion of mind and great seriousness of reflection.

He received the rudiments of his education at the grammar school in Fagg's Manor, in his native state, under the direction of the Rev. John Blair, where he acquired a taste for classical learning, which did honor to his preceptor, and displayed the opening of a refined and manly genius. At this place he was also distinguished for early piety, and was admitted to the communion of the church, in the thirteenth year of his age.

When properly qualified he was removed to Princeton, where by intense application, his constitution was endangered, and parental interference became necessary to prevent his falling a sacrifice to the ardor of his mind.

In 1766 he finished his course at College, and was honored with the degree of Batchelor of Arts, with the reputation of extraordinary attainments. Being now only in his 19th year, Mr. M'Calla was prevailed upon, by the solicitation of several respectable and literary characters in Philadelphia, to open an Academy in that place, for the instruction of youth in languages and sciences. In this useful employment he acquitted himself with honor and with general approbation. In the mean time, in addition to his favorite studies of Theology and Belles Lettres, he made himself acquainted with the science of Medicine, and the collateral branches of literature, and obtained a critical knowledge of the French, Spanish and Italian languages.

On the 29th July, 1772, he was licensed to preach the gospel, and received testimonials of their high approbation from the Rev. First Presbytery of Philadelphia.

His popular talents soon attracted the attention of several vacant congregations, who wished to obtain his residence amongst them as their pastor. He gave the preference to the united churches of New Providence and Charleston, in Pennsylvania, and was ordained their minister in 1774. In this situation he preached to great acceptance, till the commencement of the American Revolution; when a new field opened for the exercise of his eloquence, and he became peculiarly useful, in directing the views, and inspiring the patriotism of many others, as well as those of his own congregations.

After the commencement of hostilities, when the troops under the command of General Thompson were ordered to Canada, at the solicitation of several of the officers, he was appointed by Congress* to a chaplaincy to attend that corps. His opportunities for ministerial usefulness, however, were not equal to his wishes—For soon after his arrival in Canada, he was made prisoner in company with Thompson and several of his officers at Trois Rivieres.

After several months confinement on board of a loathsome prison-ship,† he was permitted to return to his friends on parole, and was restored to his congregations in the latter end of 1776. But the tranquility he enjoyed here, was not long till it was interrupted by an order issued by the commander of the British army then in Philadelphia, for apprehending him on a pretence of his having violated his parole, in praying for his country. He had timely notice of this order, and retired to Virginia. Here having received information of his release from parole by an exchange of prisoners, he returned to the uncontrouled exercise of his ministry, and at the same time took charge of a respectable Academy in Hanover county.‡

But it pleased the head of the church, by a train of providences, to remove him once more to a station better suited to his inclinations in Christ's Church—where in undisturbed retirement he pursued his beloved studies, and indulged his ample mind in inquisitive research. It has often been a subject of regret by Dr. M'Calla's admirers, that his useful talents were confined to so limited a sphere.—He was himself of a different opinion. His predilection for solitude, for the sake of study was such, that nothing but a strong conviction of impe-

* He was the only chaplain appointed by Congress—By a subsequent arrangement, chaplaincies were supplied by the commanding officer of each regiment.

† The prisoners on board of this ship were put to a scanty allowance of bad bread, and seldom a morsel of meat. Mr. M'Calla kept a shank bone of a ham for some weeks, which he scraped and shaved with his knife, long after it was stripped of every particle of flesh, and ate the scrapings to give a relish to his spoiled and worm-eaten bread.

‡While in Virginia Mr. M'Calla married Miss Eliza Todd, second daughter of the Rev. John Todd, of the county of Louisa. By this marriage he had only one child to live, who afterwards became the wife of Dr. John R. Witherspoon, and died in the 27th year of her age, leaving one son.

rious duty, could ever have drawn him out of it. Happy in the affections of a beloved congregation, amongst whom he enjoyed alternately the advantages of retirement and public usefulness—no inferior considerations could have induced him to desire a change. In retirement he possessed a tranquility, little known in the miscellaneous throngs of populous cities, which he would not have bartered for the most splendid encomiums in the roll of fame. Rather avoiding than courting public notice, he never sought, nor willingly consented that his friends should seek for him, a more conspicuous station than the one he occupied. In retirement he indulged his taste for elegant literature on every subject: But through his whole twenty-one years residence in this place, his attention was principally directed to the sacred Scriptures—He read them diligently in the originals, and in the several languages into which they had been translated: collected and compared the various readings from many authorities, and had it in design, had life been spared, to have digested his remarks, and arranged them in an order which would have rendered them useful to posterity. But infinite wisdom determined otherwise: An afflictive providence, in the death of a most amiable, excellent, and dutiful daughter, an only child, accelerated an event, which frequent attacks of sickness on a constitution already almost exhausted, must soon have brought to pass. He bore the affliction with exemplary resignation; and while he felt with sensibility, he blessed the hand that inflicted the stroke. In religion he found resources sufficient to support his spirit, but not sufficient to fortify his enfeebled frame against the power of disease. In calm submission to the paternal will of God, he met the King of Terrors with the composure and the magnanimity of a Christian, and sweetly resigned his soul into the arms of the Saviour, in whom he had long placed an unwavering confidence.

Dr. M'Calla was in person a graceful figure; polite, easy, and engaging in his manners; entertaining and improving in conversation; of a lively fancy and a generous heart; of unfettered liberality, and undissembling candor. He was easy of access, a friend to human nature, but peculiarly attached to men of science and religion.

With powers of mind equal to his piety and benevolence, he justly held a conspicuous place in the foremost ranks of eminent and good men. He was a profound scholar, combining the wisdom of antiquity with the refinement of modern literature. In biblical learning, criticism, and sacred history, he was exceeded by none.

As a divine, his theological opinions were founded solely on the authority of the Scriptures: and without servile attachment to party distinctions of any name, he professed himself a moderate Calvinist.

On the subject of church government, he was liberal, but thought the popular plan of congregational churches the most consonant to apostolic and primitive practice, and best adapted to promote the interests of piety and religion.

As a preacher, the elegance of his manner, the perspicuity of his style, the abundant variety of his information, enforced by a manly and almost unrivalled eloquence, at once charmed, convinced, and instructed. The subjects of his pulpit addresses, never uninteresting, seldom speculative, were always calculated to inform the understanding and improve the heart. To have been languid or unbenefited under his ordinary preaching, would have evinced great insensibility, or great depravity.

As a teacher of youth, he had a peculiar facility of communicating the knowlege with which he was so copiously endowed, and the peculiar happiness of commanding obedience and respect without severity or hauteur.

As a man of piety and virtue, with as few infirmities as usually fall to the lot of good men in the present world, his example in every department of life was worthy of imitation, and displayed a rectitude of mind which could only result from perfect integrity of principle.

His loss to the church, to the partner of his life, to his friends, and his country, is unspeakable: "Well done, good and faithful servant;" and a mansion in heaven are his reward.——

Thus, Brethren, we have endeavored to perform the duty of affection and respect to the memory of a truly good man. The virtues of his inestimable character will long be retained in your recollection. It remains that we consider our privation of him with a more immediate view to our own improvement. By his death the care of this art of the vineyard of God has devolved more particularly upon yourselves. It has long been distinguished by a succession of faithful, able ministers of Christ, who have labored effectually in word and doctrine, and broken the bread of life to many who now are the crown of their rejoicing in the kingdom of God. To manage the present interests of the church, to provide for its future instruction, and to maintain the cause of God and religion, is now committed to you. Whether the

rising generation shall grow up in the enjoyment of gospel privileges; whether this favored vine planted and nurtured by the hand of God, shall hereafter grow and flourish, depends much upon your faithful attention to this stewartship.

The duty is arduous indeed; but it is equally interesting and important; it is equally honorable and generous. Your reward will, in many respects, spring out of the performance of it. You will see yourselves instruments in the hand of God of promoting the best interests of society. Many, who otherwise might have been left in darkness, may, by your means, be introduced to an acquaintance with the truth that accompanies salvation. The life and power of religion will be thus likely long to be preserved amongst you: the order and decorum of good goverment will prevail in your families, the benefit of your efforts will descend to posterity, and improving the gospel yourselves you will at length be admitted to your final reward in a state of glory and immortality.

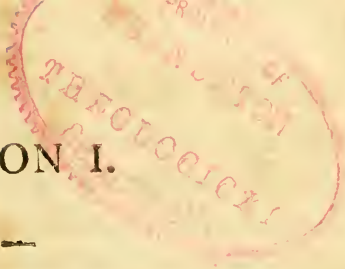
To the immediate relatives of the deceased, permit me to say, we, my friends, have sustained an irreparable loss. Persons in more distant connection will regret the removal of a man of real merit and usefulness in society: from us, he is withdrawn from our domestic circles, and subtracted from those sweet associations of which he was so essential, so ornamental, and so improving a member. In these, and in our bosoms, he has left a void never to be filled. But the virtues that endeared him to our souls fitted him for that better society to which he is now admitted. He perused and conversed in the language of heaven, while he dwelt amongst us—His soul aspired to a superior glory, and often looked forward with pleasure to the day when he expected to be made perfect in the divine likeness. Shall we lament that he has attained to the summit of his wishes? that he has put off the mortal body to shine in robes of immortality? that he has passed the years of his minority and arrived at manhood? that he has left us to join the blessed above?——Be silent, my tumultuous grief! We yield, O God, with submission to thy will—Thou hast borne him hence to realms of eternal day. Let us imitate his luminous example; let us endeavor to catch his falling mantle, and be animated with a double portion of his spirit: and though the wound cannot be healed in the present world, it will not be long till we also shall ascend to mansions in the skies, and be reunited with those whom we loved on earth, in joys that shall never end. In the mean time,

it will be highly important to improve our affliction for our own admonition and instruction—It reminds us of the uncertainty of our best and most rational enjoyments here:—It reminds us of the narrow bounds of human life on earth: Wherefore then do we suffer our affections to be unduly attached to the blessings which are already on the wing, to flee away forever? Why do we, at any time, put confidence for happiness in the life of mortals, or in their capacities, and improvements, and kindnesses, who may so easily be sundered from us? Why do we ever delay the necessary preparation for futurity, when death, whose shaft is never idle, is daily diminishing the number of those who entered into life with us, and pointing to the grave already waiting to receive us?—Let us gird up our loins, and keep our lamps trimmed and burning, that whensoever our Lord cometh he may find us watching.——

The worthy relict of our inestimable friend, is entitled in this place, to particular attention. To you, madam, the loss we deplore is unspeakable. The excellency of character which endeared your worthy husband to a numerous acquaintance; and raised him so high in the estimation of the best judges of real merit, must have endeared him still more to you. To describe your exquisite feelings, in the recollection of scenes of sublimest pleasure gone forever, would be more than I ought to undertake—No sympathy can do justice to your keener sensibility on so trying an occasion. The will of providence, however, is accomplished in respect to his faithful servant. A constant witness of his fervent piety, his animated zeal in the cause of God and religion, his steadfast faith, and his persevering assiduity in promoting the best interests of his fellow men: a witness of the calm submission with which he endured affliction; of the unshaken confidence with which he met the king of terrors, and of his humble trust in the Saviour whom he had preached to others,—A witness of his last testimony, when his faith in the Son of God failed not, but enabled him to finish his course in triumph, you have every consolation such a bereavement can admit!

All the circumstances of your affliction were ordered in infinite wisdom: In respect to the most important circumstance it has had an happy issue. While, therefore, you justly mourn, there is infinite reason why you should perfectly acquiesce in the divine dispensation But it is not necessary to instruct you, Madam, in the religious considerations which will contribute to your support—Your past experi-

ence of infinite mercy is your instructor—Your faith already stays upon the grace and goodness which preside in the direction of all the affairs of men—Already placing your confidence in God, you will be enabled to sustain and improve your sorrow with dignity, and to advantage. The Lord will not be wanting to you in the fulfilment of his promises—Every jot and tittle of them shall be accomplished, till he shall have brought you by a right way to a city of habitation, where every tear shall be wiped from your weeping eye; and what you sow in sorrow you shall reap in unceasing joy. In the mean time, permit me to commend you to his care, who has said, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me"—And to him be glory, and honor, and dominion, and power, forever and ever—Amen.



SERMON I.

THE GOSPEL TO BE PREACHED TO THE POOR.

MATTHEW xi. 4, 5.

"*Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them.*"

IT has been doubted by commentators, whether John sent his disciples to Christ for his own satisfaction, or theirs. Most probably his intention was, as he expected he himself would soon disappear, to give his disciples an opportunity of being fully convinced that Christ was the Messiah, that, on his decease, they might become followers of *the true Light.*

However, it may also be conjectured, that John labored under the common prejudice of his nation, that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince, and would place not only the nation in general, but

every individual Jew, in a state of prosperity. This appears to have been the mistake of his most intimate disciples to the very last. John therefore not fully instructed in the mission of Christ, might from the difficulties of his own situation, be led into doubt, and hesitation on the subject. Christ therefore says, " blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me;" that is, who shall not be prejudiced against me, for any difficulties which may attend the profession of my doctrines, or the followers of me, as the promised Messiah. John, though " more than a prophet," felt as a man; and the seclusion, and sufferings of a jail, might have operated with unfavorable influence, on the faith he had before exercised. This was afterwards, according to Christ's prediction, the case with many who had seen his miracles, and followed him for a time. Though John may have doubted, we may confidently believe that he died in the faith.

The message of Christ expressed those important facts which Isaiah had predicted, as characteristic of the time of the Messiah. " Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped, the lame shall leap as an hart, the tongue of the dumb shall sing, and the poor shall rejoice with mirth because of the Lord." Correspondent to these last words, and as an accomplishment of the prediction, Christ says—" to

the poor the Gospel is preached." The Latin vulgate is more correct; it says, "the poor are evangelized—The old English translation is still more accurate, "the poor receive the Gospel." They not only hear it, but embrace it—they believe it, and are saved.

As this discourse commemorates an Institution for the benevolent purpose of sending the Gospel to the poor, who have not the means of supporting a stated ministration, I propose to shew—

I.—That instructing the poor in the Gospel, is the highest act of beneficence that can be performed to mankind.

II.—The peculiar encouragements of sending the Gospel to the poor.

III.—The recompense of such beneficence.

I.—That instructing the poor in the Gospel, is the highest act of beneficence that can be performed to mankind.

1. The doctrines of the Gospel give true elevation to the mind. The poor want the means of cultivation; and their minds, like the barren lands which they inhabit, are incapable of maturity of thought. Their ideas are all depressed, and cannot rise, from the impediments of their situation, to the true dignity of their soul. This is generally the case; but there are instances of genius breaking through all difficulties, and taking a sta-

tion in the highest ranks of cultivation—The Gospel is the school of the sublimest science. The disciple of Jesus Christ is daily conversant with the highest objects which can be presented to the mind. The contemplation of God, the doctrines and miracles of Christ, the general resurrection, the last judgment, and a state of immortal duration, however imperfectly conceived of, give, from their own nature, an elevation of thought, beyond all that can be excited by natural objects.

An astronomer contemplating the Heavens enjoys an ampler and more dignified range of speculations than can be afforded by any other branch of natural science. Yet the most unlettered Christian goes far beyond him. He daily contemplates uncreated light; and anticipates an everlasting residence, where "there is no need of the sun, or the moon to shine, seeing God himself enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Mary, sitting with devout solicitude at the feet of Jesus, to hear his word, gained no doubt in one hour, more sublime ideas, than the best improved system of philosophy could teach its votaries in an age. The Christian under the tuition of the Gospel, learns the literature and science of Heaven, and regains something of that strength of thought which man enjoyed, before sin had debilitated the power of reason. This is a partial recovery of one of the lost honors of humanity; and

and is the more desirable, as it places the soul in that direct course to obtain that supreme good it was originally formed to enjoy.

It is a remarkable circumstance, that no one of the most cultivated nations of antiquity had any institutions for the instruction of the commonalty. Their most respectable philosophers do not seem to have thought this a matter of any importance. They thought it a profanation of philosophy to disclose its mysteries to any but their select disciples. In their writings they consulted only men of cultivation. The Gospel shews its superior benignity, by disclosing the means of happiness to men of all conditions, and accommodating its language to all capacities—The untractable alone are unqualified to understand it.

2. The poor are in peculiar need of cultivated affections and manners. The heart is the seat of happiness; and in proportion as that is governed by those laws which are proper to the relative connections of man, he is happy. His first regards are due to God, in veneration and love—These are the highest affections of the human soul, as directed to the supreme excellence. Next to these, are those benevolent attentions which serve to attach men to one another, and render the intercourse of social life most favorable to happiness. The Gospel is peculiarly favorable to this purpose—enjoining on every disciple of Christ the

obligation of kind, and charitable affections. It represseth pride, as leading to contempt and hautiness—envy, as prompting to ill-will—injustice, as a violation of other men's rights—intemperate anger, as exciting to violence, and every other affection which might interfere with the comfort of of others. It also teacheth the practice of those civilities which tend to render men agreeable to one another in the social intercourse. Though not inculcated by particular precepts, the school of Christ is the school of true politeness, obliging all its disciples by the general law of love, to render to every man such respect and attention, as is due to the different ranks of society. A Christian may very innocently be ignorant of many forms of civility practised in the world; but, he is obliged to aim at rendering himself agreeable to others, or to speak better, to render others pleased with themselves. There is indeed a great sacrifice of sincerity in the complaisance of the fashionable world. A Christian may be complaisant without such an expense. That benevolence which the Gospel inspires will prompt the true follower of Christ, to comply so far as he knows, with those forms of respect to others, which the custom of the country he lives in, hath established. There can be no doubt that the conversation and manners of Jesus Christ were on all occasions, graceful, obliging, and endearing: and I

feel confident in the opinion, that the Apostle Paul was an accomplished gentleman. The poor, without the advantages of culture, and by the difficulties of their condition, are often rendered fretful, impatient, suspicious of injuries, and seldom capable of those fine feelings which true benevolence inspires, and in their conversation and manners are too generally gross and degraded—The Gospel leads to true refinement in all these respects; and what is still more important, improves the moral sentiment. The poor by it, learn to be just, sober, chaste, and decorous; patient under injuries, and as the apostle beautifully expresseth it, "to bear the burden of one another." Such a temper renders them comfortable, by being pleased with themselves, and softens that asperity which almost always attends a difficult and pinching condition. Send them the Gospel therefore, and you teach them by being the followers of Jesus Christ, to practise "whatsoever things are true; whatsoever things are venerable; whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure; whatsoever things are lovely; whatsoever things are of good report;" and to be well esteemed by men of just and correct sentiments.

3. The poor are in peculiar need of consolation. Habit indeed, may in some measure, reconcile them to their sufferings; but, still they are entitled to sympathy, and require that consolation

which the world cannot give them. The Gospel alone can afford them such support as indigence requires. Hunger, insufficient cloathing, bad lodging, and the other inconveniences which attend a state of poverty, require peculiar aids to sustain the heart from falling into incurable despondence. These wants can be patiently supported by the Gospel alone. That presents to the hungry soul the bread of life; to the naked a vesture of righteousness and honor, and an house to live in not made with hands, &c. It presents hope, an hope that cannot make ashamed—the true solace of life, when worldly good hath forsaken it. It is in hope that all men live—present enjoyment is insufficient—there is perpetually a chasm in the soul, which requires to be supplied by something unpossessed, but anticipated, and this anticipation is life itself. The hope of pardon and peace with God, of a state of eternal rest and enjoyment, after the pains, the labors, and the sorrows of time have ceased, is the only true consolation which the poor can enjoy.

The tidings of such benefits procurable "without money, and without price," cannot otherwise than console the wretched, and render them patient under their present difficulties, if not contented and cheerful—Contented and cheerful I have often seen them enjoying the benign effects of the Gospel. No one need wonder that the pious poor

can be happy in their poverty. The energies of the Gospel when they reach the heart, exhibit such views, excite so many agreeable feelings, and invigorate with hope, that no condition of life can be so unhappy as not to find relief in the doctrines of Jesus Christ. He who feeds on the bread of life, requires less sustenance than other men. The little he takes is rendered more nutricious from the thankfulness and charitable affections with which he eats it. Not unconnected with this sentiment is, that fine passage in the 2d of the Acts, though deprived of its chief beauty in our common translation—" And the disciples continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness, and singleness of heart, in a charitable frame of temper towards others, praising God, and having, not as our translation renders it, favor with all the people, but good will towards them." They felt happy themselves from the calm energies of the Holy Spirit operating to elevate their minds to true greatness of sentiment, and they wished happiness even to those whom they knew to be enemies of him from whom they derived all unspeakable joy. This benign and heavenly temper is ever the effect of the love of God diffused thro' the heart. With such dispositions, how much better is " the little which the pious poor possess, (as Solomon observes) than the riches of many

wicked!" The poor are apt to be ashamed of their poverty, but poverty, when not occasioned by mismanagement, is no just cause of reproach. A certain Pope, if I remember rightly, used to boast that he was born in an illustrious house. His meaning was, that it had so many chinks and crannies, that the light entered in every direction. He was not ashamed to contrast the obscurity of his birth-place, with the splendor of the vatican. Into whatever house the light of Christ enters, that house, though made of the meanest materials, is rendered truly illustrious. The oblations of prayer and of praise which are there daily offered to God, engage the presence of him who dwelleth "in light unapproachable and full of Glory." The language of piety and kindness which is there spoken; the benevolent wishes and prayers which are sent up to heaven for all men, consecrate the dwellings of the pious poor, and render even the cottage a figure of heaven.

4. The Gospel improves the motives on which men act. The first, is piety towards God—the second, benevolence towards men—the third, a concern for their own salvation. Higher than these there are no principles by which the conduct of men can be directed. These motives indeed, take in every thing that can interest the feelings of rational beings—These motives are indispensible injunctions of the Gospel; and this alone, of all

systems of religion, has made them obligatory on mankind.

5. The doctrines of Christ inculcate industry, and consequently economy, or prudent management of family affairs. It is unquestionable, that in all countries where the citizens generally are not accustomed to hard labor, the poor who are most in need of industry, are the most indolent. By this careless temper, a poor man will become poorer and poorer,—destitute as he is of comfortable accommodations, he would rather endure them, than submit to what he thinks a greater evil, the exertions of industry. The doctrines of Christ establish a principle very important to society, "that he who will not work, neither should he eat."—They who are able to work, and will not, are not entitled to charity, and may justly be left to suffer. Christianity binds the poor to make every exertion they can, to support themselves; when they are incapable of doing that, they may justly claim the charity of those who are able to help them. The Gospel teaches independence of spirit, so that a true Christian will never ask for charity, while he has any resource within himself to depend on. When he is left without ability to help himself, and not till then, he may honorably ask the assistance of others. To a mind of true sensibility, this is indeed a case of extreme hardship; but there is no precept which requires

a Christian to perish, rather than throw himself on the aids of charity. When this sentiment of independence gets full possession of the heart, it affords the most effectual guard, next to the authority of conscience, against a fraudulent intrusion on the property of others. "Men (says Solomon) do not blame a thief, if he steals to satisfy his soul"—but, in my opinion, a Christian ought rather to prefer perishing through want, than to support life by violence or fraud.

Finally, the Gospel alone teacheth the way of salvation. "There is no other name given under Heaven, &c."

It is a case of extreme misery to be in a state of want in this world, and to have no hope of happiness in that to come. In this respect indeed, the rich have little advantage over the poor. They have, it is true, a portion of good here, but it is a poor one; and it seems just to believe, that the advantage they enjoy in this life will only serve to exasperate their misery hereafter in that to come. This life is a small part of our duration, and if there be no provision for that permanent state which is to come, it is of very little moment what our condition is here.

The world treats the poor with inhospitality, and they have little reason to attach themselves strongly to it. The Gospel alone can make them amends for their present difficulties. It directs to

Heaven where they will find every want supplied, every malady cured, and every sorrow turned into joy. On this, therefore, they are peculiarly directed to fix their attention. The hope of such an happiness may well render them contented under sufferings which they cannot redress: patient under the slights and injuries of the world, and joyful under any tribulations they may be called to endure for the sake of the Gospel and the blessedness of Heaven. Thus by rendering the poor happier in private life—better members of society, and training them up under the discipline of Christ for the happiness of a better world, the Gospel becomes to them a matter of infinite consequence, and confers on them the greatest possible good.

II.—We come now to speak of the encouragements to send the Gospel to the poor.

1. Their poverty itself is our encouragement. Distressed here, they must naturally look out for happiness somewhere. The Gospel offers a cheap and satisfactory enjoyment, and is therefore such as their circumstances require. The rich being more occupied with their advantages, though not enjoying more real good, contrive to keep themselves easy, like "the full soul loathing the honeycomb," and so have stronger objections against the means of true happiness.

2. The poor having fewer cares for this world, are less entangled than the rich, who are inces-

santly contriving new schemes for gratification. The former have therefore more leisure for applying their attention to the things which belong to their peace. It is therefore universally to be remarked, that the poor, especially when they are first made acquainted with the doctrines of Christ, discover a greater interest in what they hear than the rich. The latter have too many cares for this world, and think themselves happiest when they can escape the intrusions of serious and religious truths. They therefore say to the Gospel, let us alone—why art thou come to torment us, before the time?—let us alone for the present—at a more convenient season, we will hear thee—Thus they delay like Feliz.

3. The poor have less of that self-confidence which is the greatest impediment in the way to Heaven, and suggests one of the strongest objections to the words of eternal life. Confidence is less suited to the state of men, than any vice or folly into which their depravity leads them. It is in every respect without apology, and has nothing whatever to plead in extenuation of its absurdity and criminality—But this is the leading principle of all infidelity. I never heard of an unbeliever in the Gospel who did not shew proofs of self-importance, and this forms the main ground of all the objections which are raised against the doctrines of Jesus Christ. It has been well observed

that a little learning and philosophy will make men *foolish*, much will make them *wise*. A vain notion of superior talents, a greater caution in judging of truth, and the affection of a mind superior to vulgar prejudice, form the true grounds of infidelity. Yet when such pretensions are brought to the test, they are found utterly vain. The poor are not troubled with such vanity; they are therefore more ready to listen to doctrines which inculcate an humble and teachable temper, so peculiarly suited to their situation. It is a great happiness to be sensible of our own ignorance: this conviction is the most direct way to instruction, and the knowledge of the most salutary truths—self-confidence is a malady, though capable of a cure, is remediable only by the Gospel.

4. The poor have fewer sacrifices to make in the way to happiness than the rich. Every comfort of this world, from the depravity of man becomes an impediment in the way to Heaven. It is deplorable that every thing which attacheth the heart to this life, may prove the occasion of our hazarding the happiness of a better. But so it unquestionably is, yet the fault is our own. If it be harder for a rich man, through the temptations which accompany affluence, to enter into the kingdom of heaven, than for a Camel to pass through the eye of a needle, then blessed are the poor, for that poverty which exempts them from the embar-

rassments and hazards which accompany wealth, and excites them by the necessities of their condition to seek that good part which cannot be taken away.

Let us now consider the recompence of such beneficence.

1. To a mind of true sensibility, especially of Christian charity, every act of beneficence is accompanied with a delicate complacency or self-approbation, which, if there were nothing farther, is recompense enough. When the object of beneficence is the highest happiness of the beneficiary, the satisfaction rises to an exquisite degree. To give a meal, a night's lodging, or a suitable garment, to a weary, hungry, or naked traveller, the pleasure arising from the relief of indigence and distress, is a full equivalent for the amplest charity. The Christian aids the poor for Christ's sake, and their own, and enjoys the double satisfaction of pleasing his best benefactor, while he relieves the wretchedness of his own flesh and blood.

2. For every act of charity performed on Christian principles, there is a recompence reserved in Heaven. "Whosoever, said Christ to his disciples, expressing his warm affection for them, whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."

It is a beautiful incident in the life of Cyrus the great, whether it be truth or fiction, that being on an excursion, he met with a poor peasant, who having nothing better to offer him, ran to a neighboring stream, and brought him his hands full of water, which the prince acknowledged with great satisfaction.

Jesus Christ, while on earth, chiefly associated with the poor—familiarly conversed with them, healed their diseases, and taught them the words of eternal life. They were principally his disciples on earth, and no doubt of such will the kingdom of Heaven be chiefly composed. If, by sending the Gospel to the poor, we console them in the sorrows of indigence by the comforts of hope and peace of mind, render them more respectable and more useful members of society, and put them under a discipline which will finally qualify them for eternal happiness, we fulfil the most benevolent intentions of Jesus Christ who taught them, died for them, and procured for them the aids of the Holy Spirit to qualify them for Heaven. When they hear the voice of Christ, they come forth from their graves and go into the holy cities, and from thence become members of the heavenly Jerusalem. The rich have their origin on earth—the pious poor, being born of God, have theirs in Heaven—Their names are there recorded, and shall never be erased from the register of the liv-

ing. If there be remembrance in Heaven of benefits received on earth, the pious poor who have entered there by the aids of Christian charity here, will remember with all the ardor of gratitude, which possession of perfect happiness can inspire, that pious charity which taught them the way of life.

The effects of the South-Carolina Missionary Society have been already followed with desirable success, and it is reasonably to be expected, that it will still be more beneficial. A foreign Mission has a name, but has never fulfilled any great expectation. The British Nation is sending Missionaries to the East-Indies to convert the natives, while they are desolating their country, and reducing the inhabitants to the lowest grade of human wretchedness. Let us send the Gospel to the pagans of our own country, where we may reasonably hope, God will render the charity beneficial both to individuals and the community. There are many places where the people are in extreme ignorance—There are churches without ministers, and cases where they are supplied, the bread of life is not broken to the people. It is better in such a case, to be altogether destitute, because the souls of men are more endangered by false doctrines, which hold out a way to Heaven which the Gospel does not authorise, than if they were left in entire ignorance. The harvest truly is great,

but the laborers are few, in comparison with the wants of the people. Let us therefore pray that the Lord of the harvest, may send forth laborers into his vineyard, and give them that success which may both save their own and the souls of those who hear them.

SERMON II.

PHILIP ii. 4.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

"Do not every one (of you) aim at his own interests; but each of you also at the interests of others?" DODDRIDGE.

"Be not so selfish and contracted in your sentiments, as to be concerned only for your own advantages and happiness, but generously enlarge your views, and be attentive to the good of others also." M.

AMONG the many calamities introduced into the world by sin, it is not the least, that self-love hath generally so far gotten possession of the breasts of men, as either to confine their attention wholly to themselves as individuals, or to the few

whom nature hath connected with them by the ties of blood; or, if their feelings extend at all beyond these, to admit only of such occasional and languid exertions for the good of others, as produce no important effects.

To rectify this error of the human heart, and recover men to that diffusive and active benevolence towards one another, which God originally designed to be an established law of our natures, is one grand and immediate object of the Gospel. And wherever it is admitted to exercise its genuine influence on the temper, it will certainly produce these effects.

To pursue the subject, I propose to consider—

I.—The objects and extent of the precept—"Aim not at your own things, but at the things, or interests of others."

II.—The obligations we are under, particularly as Christians, to aim at the interests of others.

III.—The advantages that would arise from such a temper and practice, both to individuals and the community.

I.—Let us consider the objects and extent of the precept in the text.

1. It cannot be the sense of the precept before us, that we are so far to regard the advantages of other men, as to be quite unconcerned for ourselves; or are in general, to be more attentive to their welfare, than our own; because this, if it

were even practicable, would be contrary to the constitution of God, who undoubtedly intended that our own happiness as individuals, should be the main object of our concern, in subordination to his glory, which in the reason of things, is the first and highest good. To secure the goods of this world, so far as is necessary to our own private happiness, or to enable us to fill up our places in society with ease and dignity—to secure peace of mind, and to aim constantly at obtaining the favor of God; and the final happiness that our nature is capable of, can never cease to be obligatory on every individual of the species. Next to himself, it is also his indispensible duty, to pay the greatest attention to those who are nearest to him by the connections of nature, or committed to his care by the particular disposal of providence. But his affections and conduct in all these circumstances, are to be managed in such a manner, as not to exclude an active and generous concern for others of mankind. Not only to avoid with a studious carefulness all occasions of doing them an injury, but to make it his study, in consistency with the more immediate obligations already mentioned, to promote their welfare. And in exercising this benevolent disposition, the characters of men are not to be regarded, but their necessities. Not those only whose good qualities entitle them to our particular esteem; or whose friendship for us claims

all the good offices we can render them; but those also, who possess nothing to excite our respect, or engage our affection: and even those whom we expect to receive our kindness, not only without gratitude, but with a heart malevolent enough to repay our good offices with unmerited wrongs.

It was a great and pernicious mistake of the Jews to suppose, that because they were the only people in the world that maintained the worship of the true God, they were free from all obligation to exercise any good offices to persons of another nation. And something of the same narrowness and partiality of mind hath shewn itself in every age and place of the Christian Church. A zealous attachment to a party and a name has too often been supposed a sufficient reason for shutting up the bowels of compassion from those of different religious opinions.

But our Lord himself has expressly reprobated such a temper, and shewn it to be altogether inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, and all sound sentiments of religion—"Give to him that asketh thee," &c.—Read Mat. v. 42. to the end of the Ch. From which it is evident, that we are to be ready to do good to men, as their necessities may require, and as far as our abilities will enable us, whatever be their character. And though it is natural to be most attentive to those with whom we have the nearest connection—such as our own family, our

particular friends and acquaintances, and those of the religious community with which we commonly associate in the worship of God, as well as the nation in which we enjoy the benefits of civil society—yet, we are to regard men as parts of the human species, with whom we are connected by the same common nature and necessities, and are to exercise a general good will towards them, even when our active beneficence cannot reach them.

The ignorant, the slave, the vicious profligate, Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, are to be considered as men, and to be the objects of our benevolence, and the partakers of our bounty, whenever we have opportunities of serving them, in any of the necessary offices of human life.

This is the genuine dictate of reason and Christianity, and it is in our measure an imitation of the common Father of Mankind, who, with undistinguishing beneficence, "causeth his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." Mat. v. 45.

The word *look*, or *aim at*, in the original, signifies the attention with which a marksman fixes his eye on the mark at which he is to shoot. And it emphatically points out the duty of an habitual and vigorous attention. It is not sufficient that we now and then exercise some good wishes for the happiness of others, or are disposed to do them some occasional services that will put us to no expense.

Our benevolence must be an uniform principle and law of our hearts, prompting us at all times to ardent wishes; and when we can, to actual services, even though we should make some sacrifice in performing them. If we are willing to peform no services to men, but such as we can do without any, or with little inconvenience to ourselves, it is the proof of a cold, languid heart, incapable of any thing great and disinterested.

2. As to the cases in which we are to aim, to serve the interests of others, they are all those which concern the present or future happiness of men. Our bodies during the present state, are subject to a variety of wants, without some of which we cannot live at all; and without some others, we cannot live with any tolerable comfort to ourselves, or free from dependance on others. On this head, it is our duty to contribute what we can to the assistance of others who may stand in need of our help, in procuring the necessary supports of life, and preventing so far as our abilities will admit, the distresses which arise from want of food, cloathing, and the necessary defences against the inclemencies of the weather.

If providence has favored us with a competency of these, we are to be ready, on all occasions, to assist them who are naked and destitute; and with a cheerful heart to draw from our store what we can conveniently spare, without injuring those

whom it is our duty first to provide for. And in this kind and compassionate office, the benevolent and sympathetic heart will find a delight infinitely more exquisite than that of the rich man who "fareth sumptuously every day," while the hungry and naked are turned away empty. If our circumstances are such as not to admit of liberal supplies to the needy, yet we are to keep our hearts so open to the impressions of sympathy, as to be ready to do what we can; and in such a case, a cup of cold water given in compassion to the thirsty and wearied, will be thankfully received, and like the widow's mite thrown into the treasury, will in God's account, be as large an offering, as the gold and silver of the rich.

Our benevolence is also to be exercised to men under the pains, sicknesses, and other bodily distresses, to which mortality is subjected. In this case, it is not only to the poor that we must be helpful, but to those also in the most plentiful and affluent circumstances. In this respect "the rich and the poor meet together"—they are alike subject to disease, accident, and death; and though the rich may find alleviations of their distress by the abundance of their worldly goods, yet they stand in need of consolations which can only be had from the pitiful and tender-hearted, and which are often the most effectual medicine. When the heart is sunk in gloomy apprehensions—when the

blood moves languid and spiritless through its channels, and every object seems to wear to the patient the sure forebodings of his dissolution; then, a look of compassion—a soft word of sympathy, or a lively expression of hope, even from the poorest neighbor or friend, may do more to disperse the thick glooms of the mind, than the most exquisite recipe of the physician. Indeed, in all the dejections and sorrows of the heart (and they are numerous enough) the benevolent may always find opportunities of shewing their tenderness, and of doing more substatial services to mankind, than by the most abundant contribution of their property. And while they are thus performing some of the most important services to the distressed, if persons of serious reflection, they will find ample recompense for their good-will, not only in the pleasure of relieving the miserable, but from the lessons of instruction which may be learned in the dwellings of disease and sorrow: for, generally speaking, "it is better to go to the house of morning," &c. Eccl. vii. 2.

We are also to be ready, on all occasions, to assist those who may stand in need of our advice and counsel, in all matters that relate to the ease or prosperity of their worldly affairs. But there is no case wherein we may be more useful to others than in those things which belong to their future peace; nor is there any case where we are under

greater obligations to serve them. All the good we can do to their bodies, and all the other helps we can afford them, in their worldy affairs, are of short duration; reaching no farther than the grave.

To instruct the ignorant in the nature of true religion, and the doctrines which point out the way of eternal life—to admonish with tenderness and importunity those that are out of the ways of peace—to encourage the timid and irresolute—to confirm the wavering and doubtful, on all proper occasions, with prudence, tenderness, and disinterestedness—to promote the everlasting happiness of all within our reach—are undoubtedly the very first services we can render to our fellow sinners; as they are the first obligations of social life. Here indeed, there is the most ample scope for refined benevolence—for the most disinterested, and animated charity. Do we tenderly sympathise with the hungry and naked—the destitute and outcast—the pained, the sick, the sorrowful—and joyfully hasten, according to our abilities, to administer that relief which their particular necessities require. With what heart-felt concern, and urgent sensibility, should we endeavor to save the soul that is in danger of eternal misery!

It is not, indeed, the duty of every one to teach or admonish in public—but it is the duty of every one in the most private station, so far as he has ability, to use his utmost endeavor to save from the

contagion of vice, and to direct in the ways of virtue and piety, those whom providence has committed to his charge. Parents are to look after their children—masters and mistresses after their servants—and one friend after another—that nothing may be wanting that is in their power to contribute, towards securing for them the highest and most important enjoyments, that our natures can possess.

II.—We come now to consider the obligations we are under, particularly as Christians, to aim at the good of others.

1. Reason itself teacheth us, that we are bound to consult the good of others, as being parts of one great community, and mutually depending on the services of one another. "We are members," saith a heathen writer,* "of a great body. Nature hath made us kindsmen, hath implanted in us a mutual love, formed us capable of society, and the hands of all are to be employed to assist one another." Such a mutual relation and dependance of mankind, plainly indicates the constitution of the All-wise and benevolent Creator, who, no doubt, intended, by making us capable of feeling for each other, that we should cultivate a disposition to be ready, on all occasions, to assist, where we can, those who may stand in need of our help.

* Seneca—Ep. 95.

And there is scarcely perhaps, an individual in any nation of mankind, sunk to so low a state of insensibility and barbarism, as not to discover some traces of this universal law of benevolence to others of the species. The wearied, the hungry, the naked, the sorrowful, and the destitute, find every where, some soft and sympathetic hearts, that take part with them in their miseries, and at least, wish them relief, if they are not able to do more. Thus, independent of the express authority of God, mankind universally acknowledge themselves bound to look, not at their own things only, but at those of others also. So that we may apply to this case, the words of the Apostle used to another purpose, respecting the Gentiles—"that though without express law, they are notwithstanding, in this respect, a law to themselves—shewing the work of it written on their hearts."—Rom. ii. 14.

2. We are bound to aim at the good of others, in imitation of the beneficence of the common Father of Mankind, "who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works." Ps. cxlv. 9.

That diffusive munificence of God, every where full in our view, has a powerful tendency to excite in every heart, not only a lively gratitude to himself, but the generous and animated emotions of good-will to others. Especially when we consider, that the benefits of providence are com-

mitted to our management, as stewards of the household of God, not to use them for ourselves only, but to dispense them with a flowing kindness, in fidelity to our trust, and in imitation of him "who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." The heart that feels not the persuasive influence of so bright an example, must be stupified with the selfish passion, and inattentive to the operations of that universal love that sheddeth life, light, and happiness, on the whole visible creation.

The Apostle in his Epistle to the Ephes. v. 1. has expressly proposed to us the goodness of God as an example to regulate our conduct towards mankind—"Be ye therefore imitators of God, as dear children, and walk in love." And though the most vigorous benevolence in creatures can but imperfectly imitate the immensity of divine munificence, yet they are continually to hold it up to their minds, that in their measure they may, in this, as well as every other imitable excellence of divine nature, be perfect, as their "Father who is in Heaven is perfect."

We are bound to aim at the good of others.

3. By the particular constitution and precepts of the Gospel.

The Gospel is emphatically the revelation of love—God having therein given infinitely more astonishing displays of his good-will to mankind, than in any of his operations in the world of na-

ture. And this is one particular improvement which the Apostle John expressly makes of it—"Herein is love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved," continues the Apostle, "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1 Ep. iv. 10, 11.—That is, seeing God hath loved mankind in so disinterested a manner, previous to any love on our part, as the reason or motive to his, as to send his Son to be the propitiation for our sins—moved by so remarkable an example, we ought to love one another, and consequently to aim at one another's good. But besides this general consideration of the divine benevolence, which if there were no other, would of itself be a sufficient obligation on us to every practicable office of love and beneficence; the conduct of the Son of God, in executing the design on which he came into the world, superadds an obligation of singular force. His condescension in taking the human nature, in one of the lowest ranks of civil life; his indefatigable labor in doing good to the bodies and the souls of men; teaching the way of life, and "healing all manner of sickness and all maladies;" particularly enduring hunger and thirst, cold and heat; the reproaches, malice, and blasphemies, of those he was endeavoring to serve; and at last, the most exquisite pains of the most infamous death; and all these for love to

an undeserving and perishing world—these I say, are considerations which carry with them the weight of a positive law, and will be regarded as such by all who are capable of being affected by the most unbounded generosity and love. The Apostle already mentioned, carries the example of Christ so far, as to assert, that it lays us under obligation to serve one another, even at the expense of our lives; "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John iii. 16.—That is, that in consideration of the love of Christ in dying for us, we ought to be willing to hazard, or even to resign our lives, where the good of the Church should make it necessary. This undoubtedly would be the greatest sacrifice that a man could make for the good of others, or that could in any case be required of him: and nothing but the purest disinterestedness, or an invincible conviction of duty, can make a man willing to resign that for the public benefit, that is dearer to him than every other possession in the world.

But if the example of Christ in dying for the world lays us under any obligation at all, to act for the good of others, it must certainly extend to every case in which we can serve them, be it ever so expensive to ourselves of perishable property—Always however, on this condition, that the good

proposed may be greater to others, than the loss we may sustain can be to ourselves.*

The primitive Christians, especially the Apostles, seem to have been strongly influenced by the example of their Master, in bearing the most exquisite sufferings for the good of mankind. They counted not even their lives dear to them, when they had opportunities of serving their fellow-creatures in the matter of their salvation. Paul expresses himself with a peculiar strength of benevolence and resolution with regard to the Jews, notwithstanding they persecuted him with the most unrelenting malice. "I could wish myself an anathema, (that is, to suffer the very greatest worldly inconveniences, even to the loss of life itself) after the example of Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."—Rom. ix. 3. And the same noble and generous principle hath influenced thousands to perform the most important services to mankind, for the sake of Christ, in the midst of great and accumulated sufferings.

"The love of Christ," saith the Apostle, "constraineth us."—that is, it powerfully moveth us to wish and study the happiness of all men, especially their salvation. And in all remaining ages of the world, there will be those found, who would generously sacrifice much of their own good, and

* Vid. Cic. de Offic.—Lib. i. ch. 24. Ed. Pearce.

even their lives, if it should be requisite, to promote the same benevolent ends towards men, for which the Son of God "died and rose again."

We come now to consider,

III.—The advantages that would arise from such a temper and practice, both to individuals and the community.

1. As to individuals.—Benevolence is one of the purest and most lasting sources of pleasure. The pleasures which arise from sensible objects, are not only of a lower kind, than those which arise from the mind itself, but they are subject to many inconveniences. They are always liable to interruption—If constantly pursued, they become languid and insufficient—if indulged to excess, they destroy the organs that convey them, weaken the powers of the soul, and lead on to guilt and misery. But, the pleasure of benevolence is in its nature pure and exalted; the accidents and changes of life that lessen or destroy our other enjoyments, cannot affect it—Indulgence does not impair it; nor is it ever in danger of being carried to excess. It neither produces languor, nor satiety; nor does it ever leave behind it the stings of guilt, self-reproach, gloominess, and fear. While the selfish and narrow-minded, who live only for themselves, and the small circle of their nearest connections; while they seek in vain from without, for that scanty portion of enjoyment of

which their hearts are capable; the benevolent man, who is always studying to promote by some means the good of others, finds real enjoyment in the silent emotions of his own heart. Thus, according to Solomon, "he is satisfied from himself." Prov. xiv. 14. This temper not only saves a man from abundance of vexation and chagrin, which those of a contrary disposition are so liable to be affected with, and gives him an easier passage through the world,—but it is an excellent preparative for the happiness of another state, which none can be capable of enjoying whose minds do not bear some lively resemblance of him who is supremely good, and always doing good.

2. As to the community.—A general goodwill and mutual generosity between the members of the same body, whether civil or religious, is the strongest and most durable cement. It is the best security against those jealousies, animosities, and contentions, which always weaken the society where they exist, and not only pave the way to general commotion and anarchy, but render it liable to become an easy prey to rapacious invaders. It prevents distrust, injustice, and treachery, which are the seed of the most complicated and baneful calamities of civil life—And being directly the reverse of an unmerciful and ambitious temper, it is the most effectual guard against that diabolical tyranny which would bring the whole species in sub-

jection to itself, and leads on to the utter destruction of mankind.—In a word—wherever a disposition to mutual good offices is the prevailing temper of any combination of men, unanimity, justice, mercy, fidelity, and disinterestedness, will also prevail amongst them; and like a well-compacted building, where every part contributes to the strength, and beauty of the whole, will preserve its stability and reputation; while others, without such a support, are sinking on every side, into ruin and oblivion.

It was this temper that sustained the primitive Christians under the unexampled discouragements and sufferings they met with, in adhering to the doctrines of Christ. Though chiefly of the lower ranks of people, illiterate, comparatively few in number, despised and hated by all the rest of the world; yet by their singular love and disinterestedness to one another, they extorted the admiration and praise even of their enemies. See, said they, "how these Christians love one another!" And who indeed could withhold his admiration? "The multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and of one soul—neither said any of them, that aught of the things he possessed was his own —but they had all things common."—Acts iv. 32. Universally men are pleased with that simplicity, frankness, and generosity that accompanies a benevolent temper; and there is nothing that tends

more to the credit of Christians, wherever it is professed, than the appearance of these virtues. "Love is every where a cover to a multitude of faults," and more effectually than perhaps any thing besides, "puts to silence the ignorance of foolish men."—1 Pet. ii. 15. As it cannot fail of making favorable impressions of a religion which enjoins, that next to loving God with all our heart, we should love our neighbor as ourselves; "being kindly affectionate to one another, preferring one another in love." Happy, therefore, the people that are in such a case!—happy the church and nation, whose benevolence is a prevailing law. It shall flourish like a tree, whose root is watered by the streams beneath, and whose leaves are moistened by the dews of heaven.

I shall conclude this subject with two short remarks—

1. We see the excellency of the Christian religion, and its favorable influence on the happiness of mankind. It is the only religion in the world that we know of, that makes it one of the first and most necessary duties of men, that they should care for the interests of one another. Many indeed, who never knew this divine system of doctrine, have said much on the obligation, beauty, and advantages of benevolence and disinterestedness; but it is the Christian religion alone that has publickly enjoined it as a duty to all men, however

different from us in opinions, and external situation. And though it has unhappily been the case, that many who have professed Christianity, have been so little influenced by this Heavenly principle, as not only to neglect the good of others, but to act directly against it, with a malicious and diabolical pleasure; though it evinces their profession to be nothing but a name, it is no disparagement to the religion they profess. This leads me to observe,

2. That a profession of Christianity, without a benevolent and generous regard to the good of others, is utterly a vain and hypocritical profession—"Ye are my friends," said Christ, the teacher and example of benevolence, "if ye do," &c. John xv. 14. "And this is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." John xv. 12.

SERMON III.

JOHN v. 40.

"*And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*"

IT was the descriptive prophecy of the Saviour of the world; "he is rejected and despised of men." When he appeared, in the fulness of time, bringing life and immortality to light, it was said of him, "he came to his own, and his own received him not." Nor was this unthankful treatment of their greatest benefactor, peculiarly exemplified in his reception among the Jews: The whole human race have "set themselves against the Lord and his anointed, refuse his kindest overtures of grace, and will not come unto him that they may have life."

In the preceding verses our Lord had established his divine authority and convinced the Jews of their unreasonable conduct, in refusing his person and doctrine.

The text may be considered as a strong reproof of their absurdity and inconsistency.

In treating the subject, I propose with a view to its universal application,

I.—To give some account of that life which is to be had from Christ.

II.—To point out some instances by which men evidence their unwillingness to come to Christ for life.

III.—To show some of the reasons why men will not come to Christ for life.

I.—To give some account, &c.

1. The text evidently implies that previous to their coming to Christ, men are without life, or there could be no meaning in the reproach uttered against them. In order therefore, to set the passage in a just and important light, it will be necessary to consider, in what sense mankind are naturally without life—1st, All men as sinners have forfeited their original right to life, under the government of God, by an express law of which it is determined and settled, that the "soul that sinneth shall die;" let the criminal be allowed by an act of mercy, to live ever so long after the perpetration of his guilt; yet in reference to the penalty of the law he has broken, he may be properly said to be dead, in the same sense as he who has broken a capital law of the civil government under which he lives, is said to be a dead man, though the penalty be for some time suspended. In this state the sinner is not condemned to utter extinction or

loss of being; but which is, in many respects, a much greater punishment, the loss of God's favor and protection, of peace of mind, society and communion with the holy family of heaven, and all the original privileges and benefits of God's rational creatures. Thus a criminal in civil society may, by the pleasure and mercy of the judicature to which he is amenable, be permitted to live, to enjoy the light of the sun, the free air, a necessary subsistence, to walk about in his prison yard, and enjoy the conversation of his friends; while, at the same time, he is incapacitated to bear any of the offices, or enjoy any of the higher advantages and benefits of a citizen; and is liable, whenever the judge so determines, to suffer the full infliction of the penalty incurred. 2d. In addition to this misery, men are by nature, in consequence of sin, incapable of those higher employments and satisfactions which constitute the truest and noblest life of rational beings.

The soul hath lost its native taste for communion with God, and all the sublime offices and pleasures of devotion; and in the room of this, hath contracted an immoderate fondness for the grosser objects of animal desire. The contemplation of God, admiration of his character, and delight in his service, are strangers to the natural mind; indeed it is so far from delighting in the law of God, that it is not subject thereto; nor can be,

while it remains in this depravity. "They are all gone astray, they are altogether become vile," is the lamentable account which the wisdom of God gives of the heathen, and which is equally applicable to all other men in their natural state. In a word, natural men see no beauty, and take no pleasure in those things which were originally intended to entertain and make them happy. As the body may have eyes that see, but do not discern the beauty and proportion of the objects before them; and ears that hear, but are not capable of distinguishing and being delighted with the harmony of sounds; so the soul retains all the powers it originally possessed—but it is not capable of those refined satisfactions it was originally made to enjoy.

The Apostle speaking to the Ephesian converts, with respect to their former estate when Gentiles, says, "you hath he quickened (or made alive) who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein ye sometimes walked," &c. And this is the case with all men so long as they remain under the power of a natural mind; they are utter strangers to the nobler exercises and affections of the soul—they employ their reason and other powers in pursuits that make no compensation for the anxieties and labors they occasion—Always longing and toiling, but never satisfied—wasting a precious existence in vanity and vexation of spirit, and

at last, perhaps, settle for their immortality, where no enjoyment, or even hope of it, can ever enter. Thus they are dead, even while they are alive—Dead to the most important truths; dead to peace—the peace that passeth understanding; dead to the noblest pursuits and hopes, and dead to the substantial, permanent, and divine pleasures of holiness.

From the first of these states, as legally dead, men are released, by the atonement of Jesus Christ, who came into the world to suffer the curse which man had incurred. In this view, his sufferings are considered as answering all the purposes that might have been answered by inflicting the due punishment on man himself. The honor of the divine government is more abundantly illustrated; the divine perfections more amiably displayed—Man is liberated from the sentence of death, restored to favor and communion with God, and put into a way of attaining at length, to the Paradise from which his transgression at first excluded him. By this most gracious and admirable constitution, man from a condemned criminal, debarred from the highest dignities and rights of his creation, is restored to the freedom and citizenship of the son's of God. He can approach God, however, exalted above him, as a child approacheth a father, with a respectable freedom, and ask for his blessing and protection. He keeps

up a sacred correspondence, in the duties of an humble and upright devotion, with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

But besides this releasement from a legal death, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, the sinner who complies with the offer and appointment of God, obtains such a change of his nature as produceth a new principle of action, new desires, new hopes and fears, new pursuits, and new pleasures. The atonement opens a way for the correspondence of the soul with Heaven. God can, consistently with his honor, visit man with that peculiar grace which gives new light to the understanding, sets the divine character, works, providence, and word, in a view that strikes and charms the heart into love and praise; removes its prejudices against the divine law, corrects its depraved and vicious affections, and turns them into a new and heavenly channel; reduces the stubborn and rebellious will into an humble submission to the divine sovereignty, and gives a new and devout turn to the conversation and life. Christ says of himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He came into the world that men might have life, and more abundantly than could be had by any other way. His precepts and example teach the way of life; his atonement is the procuring cause, and his spirit the efficient cause of life. Finally—he comprehends the most perfect life in

himself—is the author of life to the whole creation, and confers a spiritual, holy, and immortal life on all that accept and rely on him for this life. "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life," 1 John v. 12. "Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." John iv. 27. "As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

If then all men that are without Christ are in such a state of death as hath been represented; and so important, so comfortable, and so durable a life is to be found in Christ; is it possible that there can be any thing in the heart of man that is reluctant against the free and generous offers which Christ makes of it, or any evidence in his conduct of a backwardness to accept it?—Yes—our Lord himself reproaches his hearers with so unreasonable and fatal a state of mind—"ye will not," &c. But in what instances is this to be discovered?—This is the next particular to be considered.

II.—The unwillingness of men to come to Christ for life, is evidenced,

1. By the fault they are disposed to find with, and the opposition they make against the Gospel. We find this to be the case, in all places, and at all times. It was remarkably so with the majority

of the Jews and Gentiles in the time of our Lord himself. They cavilled at, and ridiculed his doctrines, blasphemed his character, and abused his person, till at length they put him to death, as an innovator in league with the devil, a deceiver, disturber of the public tranquillity, and a blasphemer, For the same reasons, they treated his Apostles, with the same contempt, malice, and cruelty. And the professors and supporters of Christianity have, through every succeeding age, been opposed, contemned, persecuted; and thousands of them put to the most ignominious and painful deaths, as publishers of, and retainers to a system of doctrines inconsistent with reason, and productive of confusion in society.

Men of wit and power have employed all their ability to defame, discountenance, and banish from mankind, the only means of saving the world from a general destruction. The learned and unlearned, noble and ignoble, rich and poor, rulers and subjects, have in numberless instances tryed every expedient, either to take off the lustre of some of the most important doctrines of revelation, or to bring them into neglect. While at the same time, the most absurd, cruel, and tyrannical systems of religion—systems at which reason blusheth and is abashed, have been founded, propagated, and supported by eloquence, learning, fire,

and sword, oftentimes to the utter ruin and desolation of whole kingdoms and nations.

2. Men evidence their unwillingness to come to Christ for life, by their neglect of the ordinances of the Gospel, even in those places where they are generally acknowledged to be of divine authority, and necessary to salvation. Multitudes of those who go under the denomination of Christians, and profess to hold the doctrines of Christ as contained in the Holy Scriptures, do notwithstanding give themselves little or no trouble to be acquainted with those doctrines; seldom making use of their bibles, where they acknowledge these doctrines to be contained; or, if they take them up now and then, they peruse them in so careless and indifferent a manner, as sufficiently argues that they either entertain a secret disgust agaist them, or look upon it as a matter of little or no consequence to be well acquainted with them. Were they anxious or willing to come to Christ for that life he is able and willing to give them, they would read and study with eagerness and delight, those sacred treasures of divine wisdom, in which are contained the words of eternal life; and which for this reason Christ directed his hearers to search—"Search the Scriptures," &c. And, as to the public preaching of the Gospel, if it happens to be customary and reputable to go to church, to keep up a fair outside, and a good name, they will

give them attendance, as they judge it necessary for these purposes, and find it can be done, without much trouble: but, at the same time, it is far from their intention or desire to be improved in the knowledge of Christ, or prevailed on to relinquish their sins, and live a devout and holy life. They are pleased to see and be seen, and converse with their acquaintance about their farms or their merchandize, the times and the seasons, and any thing that has no connection with the proper business of assembling themselves together on the Christian Sabbath. The trifling air, wandering eyes, and indevout aspects of our congregations, are unquestionable evidence that Christ is not in their thoughts; or, if they are obliged to think of him, by the discourse of the preacher, though the words may be to them, while they are hearing, as the sounds of a pleasant instrument; they pass off the mind, as a bird through the air, leaving no trace behind them. Of those who have constant opportunities of hearing the gospel preached in the clearest and most fervent manner, numbers who would be willing to be saved, are not even prevailed upon to relinquish gross immoralities, but habitually indulge themselves in practices that dishonor human nature, waste their estates, impair or destroy their constitutions, and lead directly on to final and irrecoverable perdition. And of those who lead regular and reputable lives, and per-

haps, keep up some form of private, as well as public devotion, how many are there who pay only a partial respect to the ordinances of Christ, attending on some, and neglecting others of equal, or perhaps greater importance. There are great numbers who read the Scriptures perhaps, with some serious attention; go steadily and decently to church, and would not, on any account, be unbaptized themselves, or bring up their children so;—who, notwithstanding, can live contentedly, from year to year, without celebrating the Supper of the Lord. I do not speak of those who professedly leave out this part of the institution from their system of religion, as not necessary to be commemorated in an external form; I speak only of those who do profess to believe it as an institution of Christ, and a necessary part of the Christian system. If we examine into the foundation of this neglect, I think we shall find it to be clearly this, that such persons are not willing to come to Christ for life.

It must be universally acknowledged, that Christ as a law-giver to his kingdom, and head of his church, was fully empowered to make such institutions as he judged of importance to his subjects. Now this institution was not designed barely to show his power and authority in the church, but, in condescension to the weakness of human nature, as accommodated to the bodily

senses, and calculated to keep up in the minds of men the remembrance of his sufferings, the procuring cause of their salvation, which might otherwise have been soon neglected and forgotten—"As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup," saith the Apostle, speaking of the supper, "ye do shew forth the Lord's death, till he come." And Christ himself, when he first instituted it, tells his disciples to do it, that is, break bread and drink wine, in remembrance of him—"This do, as oft as ye do it, in remembrance of me." It was to be a test to his disciples of their faith in him, their love to him, and desire of perpetuating some indication of their love for him. He himself lays it down as a proof of their friendship to him, that they would observe whatever he enjoined upon them—"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Now, I think it is universally observable, that when persons become seriously engaged about salvation, they cannot content themselves with a partial observance of the institutions of Christ, they are anxious to try every mean of salvation, that they may not miss it, by a neglect of any known command.

Some indeed may, through an apprehension of coming unprepared to this ordinance, and incurring the danger of eating and drinking unworthily, keep off for a considerable time, after they are asking the way to Zion, with their faces thither-

ward; but this difficulty seldom lies very long in the way of any one. It is usual with the spirit of God, when it sets the soul heartily to seek its redemption, to make its way clear before any very long time, to wait upon him in this, as well as other of his appointed means of grace. With some, the time of their darkness and diffidence as to this ordinance, may be longer—with others, shorter. At any rate, where a person is really and earnestly engaged to come to Christ for that life which this ordinance pointeth out, he cannot be contented with neglecting it; but will use his utmost endeavor to obtain all the light that he can, with regard to his duty in the case. It will pain and distress him to the utmost, that he cannot see his way clear enough to attend upon it with complacency and freedom. He will read, pray, and converse anxiously, with every one that he thinks can give him any light on the subject; and when the difficulty is removed, he comes rejoicing.—This, I believe, is a representation of the matter altogether just—to the the truth of which, every person who now hears me, that has ever been earnestly engaged about religion, will readily assent—So that I am free to draw this conclusion, that those who can live contentedly without complying with the command of Christ, to commemorate his atonement by attending on this his own express institution, are not willing to come to him that they might

have life. If they are thinking at all about their salvation, they are building on "some other foundation than that which is already laid," &c.

But, the unwillingness of men to come to Christ for life, is evidenced—

3. By the various expedients they make use of when under conviction, to compose their consciences, and keep up their hopes—

This is a case which more fully than any other discloses to a man that fondness so natural to the human heart, of depending on itself. When a sinner takes a serious view of himself in the faithful light of the Divine law, and finds that both by that law and the report of conscience, he is a condemned criminal, in danger of final perdition—though the first step he determines to take, is to try to repent of his sins, and reform his life. In this state of mind, he has a secret apprehension, not only that there is some merit in the resolution he is making, but that he is fully able to carry it into execution. Finding however, at length, that this is not sufficient to make his conscience easy, he determines farther, to enter on a course of practical religion. In consequence of this, he sets himself to meditate, read, pray, attend public worship, keep the sabbath, perhaps commune at the Lord's table; and in a word, both to do and forbear, in all cases, as far as he can discover his duty. In pursuing this course, he finds some rest

from the accusations of conscience, and gradually views himself in a more favorable light, till perhaps he concludes all danger to be over, and his peace made with God on a sure and permanent foundation. All this time, it may be, he has kept his eye steadily fixed on the importance and efficacy of his own works, without any respect to the atonement of Christ, as the sole meritorious cause of salvation.

This is the principle on which every awakened sinner sets out, in his first attempts to obtain redemption, and on this principle every sinner will persist, till he is beyond the reach of mercy, if he be not set right by the spirit of God, which alone putteth wisdom in the inward parts. In short, men will try every expedient that their fears and self-confidence will lead them to, rather than be obliged to Christ for salvation; and it is only in the last extremity, when every other method fails, that they will come with an humble acknowledgment of their own insufficiency, placing all their hopes in, and ascribing all merit, honor and power to him alone, in whom there is redemption through faith in his blood. This being the case then, we naturally conclude there must be some powerful objections in the heart of man, that thus lies in the way of his duty and happiness—which leads to inquire

III.—What reasons may be assigned why men will not come to Christ for life. Of these it will

be sufficient to our purpose, at present to mention such only as appear to have the principal weight in the matter.

The first that presents itself, and which seems to be the foundation of all the rest, is—1. Ignorance of the true state of human nature, as it is now depraved. Whatever ability man might have possessed in his innocency, for keeping the divine law, or whatever reasons there might have been, at that time, for claiming some merit to his obedience—it is plain these have all ceased from the time of his fall. But, this is a truth he is not sufficiently acquainted with. He is still disposed to estimate of his powers, as though they had suffered no abatement by the loss of innocence, but were still competent to all his obligations. He fancies to himself, that he knows all branches of his duty, can devise all necessary expedients for discharging it, and is furnished with a sufficient stock of integrity and resolution, to adhere to it through all discouragements and opposition. As for the law of God, he entirely mistakes the true nature and design of it; not considering that it is a spiritual law, reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart, requiring the purest principles of action from all its subjects, denouncing the severest condemnation against every transgression, as well of the thoughts as of the life—a law by which there is no possibility of being saved after it has been

once violated. To comply with the letter and expression of this law seems to be the utmost that men aim at, when they are endeavoring to obey it —If they find themselves to be tolerably exact in this point; they think the whole of their duty is complied with—" All these things," said the young lawyer to our Lord, speaking of the commandments, " all these things have I kept from my youth up." But after all their hopes and pretensions, when the matter is examined into by the judge and maker of the law, it will be found with all men on this footing, as it was with that sanguine but mistaken youth, " One thing yet lacketh." There is still some lurking principle in the soul, which like a worm in the heart of an apple that is fair and blushing on the outside, eats away the best part of its substance, and gradually destroys the whole. The best system of good works that any man ever framed, has some essential defect that renders it unworthy of God's acceptance, and quite too weak to be trusted to for safety in the day of wrath. Paul himself, who had as good pretensions on this head as any man since the fall, was so far from estimating his righteousness at a high rate, that he considered it as a garment not only too ragged and tattered to cover the body; but, too loathsome and offensive to be worn on it. Mankind are also exceedingly mistaken as to the divine character. They are very apt to conceive

God to be like themselves, as having no fixed and unalterable principle of action, founded on propriety and truth; or they frame to themselves such a notion of him as is best suited to compose their fears, and reconcile them to their sins. They would wish him to be a God without any fixed detestation of sin, or determination to punish it: and this wish gradually leads them to believe him to be such. On this principle, they persuade themselves that there is no great danger in sin—that God will make great allowances for their imperfections, and accept their penitence and partial disjointed services in the room of perfect obedience, and as an atonement for all their offences. The consequence of these misapprehensions is, that they see no necessity of, and therefore no importance in the atonement of Christ, nor any form or comeliness in him, why they should desire him.

Inquiring into the frame and constitution of the Gospel, we find that it tends to mortify the pride, and displace the self-confidence of man. And this is

2. Another reason why men will not come to Christ for life.

There is no principle more deeply rooted in the human constitution, nor any one to which mankind more steadily adhere, than a fondness of raising their own importance above all reasonable measure, and of arrogating more merit and honor than can, in any sense, belong to them. And this

discovers itself, not only in their transactions with one-another, but with God himself. Thus in all ages men have been opposed to God's revelation, as interfering with the rights and prerogatives of human reason. They have counted it hard and dishonorable to be obliged to take any thing as true, barely on his word and authority; and have refused to credit some of the most important discoveries that have been made to the world, because they have not been able to penetrate to the bottom of them, and solve all the difficulties that have apparently attended them. Some of the fundamental truths of the Christian religion are such as are not comprehensible by human reason; and objections, cavils, and oppositions, have been made against that religion, because God hath seen fit to make a reserve in this respect, as a mark of his sovereignty, and a test of the humility and faith of mankind. This consideration, if properly attended to, is a most conclusive proof that a religion which proposeth doctrines that never could have entered into the human heart, independent of revelation, must certainly be of God the Father and Fountain of Truth. This is a proof both of his wisdom and goodness, as he has in this very instance, given the highest possible evidence that the Scriptures are derived from him, who alone could reveal incomprehensible things.

But, this perverse humour in man of wanting to bring every thing to his own standard, turns the highest expression of the divine goodness into arguments to prove his want of it. The incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection, and the operations of the divine spirit, have all of them, at one time or another, been cavilled at, if not even ridiculed, as inconsistent with sound reason, and involved in too many difficulties or absurdities to be received by men of knowledge and improvement.

On this head there is another difficulty with mankind, which seems to take its rise from the same principle as the former objection, and that is, that the Gospel ascribes all the honor and praise of man's redemption to the grace of God. In this case, as in all others, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." The scriptures are express, that "we are saved by grace through faith," &c. so that "he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Now these are hard sayings for the pride of man: they strike directly at the root of all self-confidence and boasting. Grace begins, grace carries on, and grace perfects the work of redemption in every soul that is saved. Notwithstanding this, man would fondly claim some part of the honor of his salvation to himself. He would be willing to go on the shares with God in this matter; but is not, by any means willing to give up the whole.

The last reason to be now mentioned, why men will not come to Christ for life, is—

5. That the terms on which God proposeth to save them by the gospel, are such as lay a restraint on their passions, and regulate them in their pursuits of the world. So independent is the spirit of man, that in all cases he would wish to be free of restraint, and act entirely by the direction of his own judgment, or the impulse of his own desires and passions. Be the case ever so difficult or hazardous, he is disposed rather to take his own way, than be guided by another. Nay, he secretly finds fault even with God for not giving him liberty to choose and act on all occasions as he would think proper for himself. This principle is as old as human nature—It began with our first parents in paradise, and has run down through the whole mass of mankind from that time to this. But God has wisely and mercifully thought proper to lay some restraint on mankind, and establish both the principles on which they are to act, and the limits by which they are to be confined. In order to receive the benefits of the gospel, we are bound to submit to Christ, as our law-giver, and take his precepts and example for our guide. In exercising his authority in this character, he has commanded us "to love the Lord our God, with all our heart, &c. and our neighbor as ourselves," "to love our enemy—to bless them

that curse us," &c. "to take no anxious thought for our life—to seek first of all the kingdom of God," &c. "to take up our cross and follow him"—and in a word, to be entirely subject to his authority and direction, if we would be his disciples and members of his kingdom. Now, there is not one of these, or of the many other precepts he has given us, that does not interfere with some favourite propensity, or interest of the human heart. All men are disposed to love the world in preference to God, and to bestow the chief of their attention and time, to procure such of its advantages as they respectively prefer. All are naturally disposed to return evil for evil, to let their resentments run so high as secretly to wish some kind of revenge. And all are so fond of ease, and of falling in with the corrupt sentiments and customs of the majority, as rather to forfeit the hopes of salvation, than submit to the labours and severities of a religious life, or expose themselves to the derision, insults, or persecution of the enemies of the gospel. As they cannot obtain salvation on their own terms, viz. to reconcile the hope of, and title to heaven, with a supreme love of the world, and the service of their corrupt and vicious inclinations—they will not have it on Christ's terms, and so put themselves out of the way of ever obtaining it at all; from which deplorable end nothing can possibly save them, unless he

who is able to subdue all things to himself, open their eyes; and so make them willing, in a day of his power.

I shall conclude this discourse with one reflection.

How deplorable is this state, and how inexcusable are they who stand in the way of their own happiness, by refusing to submit to the only method by which it is possible to be saved! Were there any just ground of complaint against the Gospel, any defect or inconsistency in its doctrines, any jarring or discord in the parts which compose it, any thing exceptionable in the character of its author, any ground to question his sufficiency for the business he undertook, any thing hard or unreasonable in the precepts he delivers, or the conditions he requires of those that would be saved if there were any just reasons to suspect the certainty of salvation to them, who comply with the terms on which it is offered—or, in a word, were there any thing inconsistent with sound reason, with true honor, or any of the great and important duties and interests of human nature, in submitting to Christ as the professed author and giver of life, there would be some plausible excuse for those who should refuse. But, on the contrary, when the gospel has every thing in it to recommend itself to the reason and affections of mankind—every thing sublime, entertaining and astonishing in its

doctrines—every thing clear and intelligible, and full in its precepts—every thing persuasive in its motives—every thing charming and animating in its prospects—every thing lovely and majestic in its author, spotless in his example, meritorious in his death, and faithful to his promise—where there is every thing in his plan of redemption, to remove the fears, and animate the hopes of mankind—every thing to make life comfortable, death safe, and an immortal existence completely happy; and especially, as there is no other method of obtaining salvation if this should be neglected. How absurd, how inconceivable, how fatal at last must such a refusal be! And how inexcusable will they be who perish under such advantages!

SERMON IV.

PSALM CXIX. 9.

"Wherewithal shall a Young Man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy Word."

YOUNG MEN,

ACCORDING to my promise, I have prepared an address, to you in particular. And, as I have been induced to pay you this respect, from an affectionate concern for your happiness, I may the more reasonably hope, that you will hear me with attention, candor, and seriousness. Without this, the great object of my labor will be lost, and my earnest desires painfully disappointed. Oblige me then so far, as to keep your minds open to instruction, and conviction; and then, by the blessing of God, I persuade myself, we shall have reason to rejoice together.

The words I have read contain a very important question directly to my purpose, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" What course of life shall he pursue, and by what rule shall he be guided, in order to escape those irre-

gularities and evils to which youth is ever exposed?

The question evidently implies that his situation is attended with peculiar danger; and that he has neither knowledge, nor experience, nor any command over himself, sufficient to secure his safety—and therefore, that he stands in need of such a rule as is both capable of pointing out his duty, in all circumstances, and possessed of authority to reach and determine his conscience. This rule is immediately proposed in the answer to the question, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

Taking this for his guide, with a conscientious regard to his duty, the whole of his life shall be virtuous, honorable, and happy. From this view of the text, I propose to consider,

I.—The principal things which young men are to attend to, in order to maintain a pure and unblameable course of life.

II.—The rule which they are ever to place before them, as the standard of their temper and conduct.

1. The principal things, &c.

Under the first head, I shall consider in this discourse, the duty of early piety, and its principal advantages; the duty and advantages of early engaging in useful employment; and the necessity of a prudent choice of company.

1. The first thing which claims your regard is piety or religion. By this I mean, not only those acts of homage which are immediately due to God, but every part of our duty, as fixed by his authority, including as well the principles on which it is performed, as the outward acts.

Every obligation of divine appointment, is a part of religion; and though some are superior in dignity to others, with regard to their immediate objects; yet all are equally to be regarded in practice, so as that no one is to be neglected, under pretence of discharging another. And indeed this can never be necessary, because the whole system of our duties are so framed, as to be perfectly consistent with each other. If one be neglected, it is disobedience to the authority on which the whole are founded; and the guilty person is as really a transgressor, though not in so high a degree, as if he had broken every individual law, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." I mention this the more particularly, as in all ages men have been ready to suppose, that if they worship God, it would go in the room of their duties to mankind; and so while they have prayed, fasted, and paid tithes, they have "neglected justice, mercy, and fidelity," to their neighbor. Or they have gone into the opposite error, and concluded, that justice, mercy and fidelity to men, were the whole of reli-

gion; and so neglected the necessary acts of direct homage to God. But certainly, for the same reason that we are to acknowledge and worship God, as an express part of our duty, we are to study the good of others and ourselves, in that way which he hath prescribed, as equally a matter of conscience and obligation. It is further to be considered, that the principle on which any duty is performed, is as much to be regarded, as the act itself. Indeed there is properly no religion in any act whatever, but so far as it is done from a right intention, that is, always with a view to the will and pleasure of God. The act is but the form, the intention or principle is the substance.

It was for this reason, that the tithes, alms and prayers of the Pharisees were of no account in the sight of God; because they did them "to be seen of men." And of the same quality will be every form of religion, how exact soever, when "the heart is not right with him."

This distinction I wish you the more carefully to attend to, because there is no mistake more common, and none more fatal, than to rest in a "form of godliness without the power." Should you fall into this mistake, it will ruin the whole of your religion, however plausible in appearance, and leave you at last, as far from God and Heaven, as they who have lived without even the form of it.

You are also to remember, that since the coming of Christ, it is as much a duty to those who enjoy the gospel, to believe in him, to worship through him, and to hope for salvation by his merits, as to obey the first command, "to worship God, and him only to serve." This is so necessary, that neither our prayers, nor praises, nor confessions, nor any other service will be accepted, on any other terms. And it is so far from being left to the liberty of men, to reject it if they please, as a matter referred entirely to their own option; that nothing is more expressly enjoined, than to believe in, and obey him; and nothing threatened with an heavier penalty, than to refuse to acknowledge and receive him. "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, repent ye, and believe the gospel." "He that believeth not is condemned already." "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." This is his commandment, "that we should believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ." The substance of the religion of the gospel is, that we "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world;" "and whatsoever ye do, whether in word, or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God, even the father by him."

It is by this that your actions, words, passions, and thoughts, and all your views and measures

for this and another world, are to be governed, and determined as good or bad, in the sight of God. You cannot therefore, be too careful, to obtain a just knowledge of the duties it prescribes, of the authority and sanctions by which they are enforced, and the great and everlasting advantages they afford. And so far as you discover your duty, or, after due examination, think that you discover it, whether it be in appearance of greater or smaller moment, make it a matter of conscience to do it, because all obligations are equal, with respect to the authority of God; and if you neglect the dictates of conscience in one instance, you will do it in another; till by degrees it will cease to be the rule of your conduct; and so you will be "destroyed by little and little."

After this short view of the religion of the gospel, on which all your happiness depends, you will naturally inquire at what time of life you come under its obligations. As soon undoubtedly, as you are capable of understanding them, and feeling the force of those motives by which they are urged. And I should suppose this to be the case, as soon as the the mind is capable of being affected by the advantages of the world, and of forming schemes for obtaining them. This in different persons, may happen at different times; but is much sooner in all, than any are willing to think a proper season for becoming responsible to the

laws of God, and submitting to the restraints of religion. It is a common prejudice of youth, and the source of almost all the errors of their succeeding life, that they are under less obligation to be religious, than those of advanced years; that dissipation and gaiety are more suitable to their state of life, than the gravity, thoughtfulness, and cares of religion, and that they are less in need of it, than when they will be more liable to afflictions and death, and less capable of enjoying the world. If this were even true, it is equally so, that youth is exposed to every calamity that affects the succeeding ages of life; and are therefore both in need of those supports which religion alone can give, and bound to secure them as early as they may be obtained. Besides, if it be their duty to repay the care and tenderness of their earthly parents, with the earliest expressions of gratitude, love, and obedience they are capable of; much more certainly, the love and goodness of God, "in whom they live, and move, and have their being." Or can it be supposed, that at that time of life, when it is criminal to neglect or disobey a parent, it is not so to neglect and disobey the father of our spirits? Certainly, no. Neither can it ever be with reason supposed, that we do not come under obligations to regard the authority of God, till that time of life, when we cease to be under that of our parents. The truth is, that the objections of youth

against early religion are so far from being well-founded, that they originate in a desire of all others the most unreasonable and pernicious; that of living without any restraint on their inclinations and pursuits, and so would wish to put that off to the last, which in point of importance and necessity is first.

But, without reasoning farther on the subject, it will appear, that so many advantages arise from it, that independent of other considerations, to neglect it, is to undervalue and slight our happiness, to consult which God hath made one essential part of our duty.

Advantages of early religion.

1. The difficulties which attend the entrance on a course of piety, are in youth, usually sooner, and more easily surmounted.

The conscience is more susceptive of conviction, the affections softer and more pliant, and more apt to be affected with the consideration of the love and mercy of God. There are fewer bad passions and principles in operation, fewer engagements with the world, and fewer and less inveterate habits of sin to oppose and reform.

It is true, that the power of "God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure," can as easily affect and change the heart at any age of life, and at any possible degree of guilt, within the bounds of mercy, as another;

yet in this and every other case, we are not to consider what is possible for him to do; but what he usually doth. Agreeably to this, it appears to be matter of fact, that the greatest number of those who "have passed from death to life," where the gospel has been statedly dispensed, has been under the time of middle life. To this purpose Dr. Doddridge remarks, that the most of those who were hopefully converted by his ministry, in the congregation where he resided, were under the age of twenty-four.* And though there are every where instances of the triumph of the grace of God at a much later period; yet they are so few, in comparison of those which happen earlier, as to shew in the most forcible light, the importance of cherishing religious impressions, in that season of life which is found by experience, to be the best adapted to retain them.

2. It is very difficult to break off from habits of sin that have been long in force.

We are influenced by habit, in a manner that cannot well be explained. So great is its power over us, that where its effects are most obvious and prejudicial to our happiness, we often continue in what we even wish and determine to relinquish. And it is no doubt, in a great measure, owing to this circumstance, that there are so few

* See the eighth of his ten Sermons on Regeneration.

instances of effectual reformation, after the season of youth has elapsed. Of those who attempt it, the greatest part, after weak and irresolute efforts, usually go back, by degrees, till they get quite into their old habits of transgression; and there continue, for the remainder of life, without perhaps trying again to recover. So just and agreeable to experience are the words of the prophet, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to evil." Nor need it be wondered at, if we consider the hardship and self-denial it costs even youth, to correct habits of only a few years standing, and fall into new and opposite courses of living. The advantages however, are so much on this side, that they ought effectually to determine you, before your hearts have become "hardened by sin," and bad habits have acquired an incorrigible influence over you, to endeavor to fall into those which you will never have occasion to alter; and which will gradually become easier and easier, till they will be your choice and delight. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with the horses? And if in the land of peace wherein thou trustest, they wearied thee; what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?"

If you find it now so difficult to break off from any favorite course of life, and deny yourselves

any sinful gratifications to which you have been accustomed, what prospect can you have of reforming at any future time, when you will not only have to contend with those in which you now live, with the additional strength they will then have acquired, but probably a great many others?

3. Early religion prevents a great deal of guilt, and consequently of remorse, and pain of conscience.

While a man is in the habits of sin, he is not only every day increasing the measure of his guilt, but proportionably preparing for himself "tribulation and anguish" of conscience, which sooner or later, he will certainly endure.

They who make themselves the easiest in a course of transgression, have their seasons of cool and impartial reflection, when conscience interrupts their repose, and fills them with inexpressible uneasiness at the apprehension of suffering the righteous judgment of God. Were it even possible for a sinner to fall into such a state of stupefaction, as to go on to the end of his life, without any remarkable anxiety or remorse; yet, death must at length break off his slumbers, and leave him from that moment to the "preying of the worm that never dies." And it cannot be doubted, that his misery in such a state, must be so much the greater, as he enjoyed longer time to increase and aggravate his sins.

But, supposing him by timely repentance, "to escape from the wrath to come;" even that will be attended with pains and agony of mind, sufficient to destroy for the first time, the sense of all past enjoyments; and will be so much the sharper and more distressing, as it hath been longer deferred. Even they who break off the earliest from their sins, endure enough to overbalance all the guilty pleasures, for which they bartered their peace, and by which they prepared for themselves the whips and scorpions of an accusing conscience.

4. It early opens the way to the esteem and confidence of mankind. These are certainly desirable, not only as they may generally be considered as testimonies of merit; but also, which is of greater importance, as they give the possessor the greater opportunity of being useful to others. In both these respects, "a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor than silver and gold."

With whatever slight or contempt loose and irreligious men may affect to speak of religion, and those who profess it, I believe there are few so insensible of the difference between virtue and vice, as not to feel a secret respect for those whose conduct testifies the purity and integrity of their hearts. To which may be added, that universally, in the same degree as men appear to be influenced by conscience, and the fear of God, they

will be trusted in matters of importance, in preference to others, even by those who are the furthest from any pretensions to religion. And it is particularly to our purpose to observe, that the longer persons are known to have lived in the habits of piety, the more they are esteemed, and the more confidently trusted, which ought perhaps to be considered, as in part, the reward of an early compliance with the first duty of human nature.

5. It is peculiarly amiable in the sight of God himself.

The most shining talents, the most enlarged improvements, and the most agreeable temper and disposition, are of no estimation with him, in comparison of piety. "He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." And, if "he loveth the righteous," however late their repentance, and return to their duty, may we not justly suppose, that the sacrifice of youthful inclination and pleasures for the duties of religion; and the dedication of our first affections, time, and abilities, to the father of our spirits, must be the most acceptable offering we can present to him? Joseph resisting the solicitations of his mistress, and Solomon asking wisdom in preference to "riches, honor, and the life of his enemies," must in these circumstances, have been more amiable in the sight of God, than when ar-

rived at the height of their worldly honors; when the former rode in the second chariot of Pharoah; and the latter sat on the throne of David.

Finally, under this head,

Early piety is an early and effectual provision against the afflictions of life, and the terrors and sting of death.

" Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;" and he is the happiest who is best prepared, not only to meet it with an humble and patient spirit; but to improve it, for the establishment of his piety, and the increase of his comfort. Thus improved, every affliction is, in effect, a solid blessing; and the sharper it has been, the more advantage it yields. But it is true religion alone that can thus convert the natural evils of life into the most substantial good; and make that which is always grievous to the flesh, to " yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby."

Youth indeed, is apt to promise itself a long exemption from pain, disease, sorrow, and all the other forms of human misery; but, how often do they all arrive in quick succession, long before they were expected; and pierce the heart so much the deeper, as they were supposed to be more remote! Against all these evils, the comforts of a good conscience, and the special promises of the gospel, are an effectual defence; come as early

and as unexpected as they may, and in any shape whatever, they cannot be unseasonable, neither can they hurt the better part of the Christian.

While they serve to correct the levities of the youthful mind, and discipline it into patience and humility; they also quicken it into early activity and zeal in the service of God; and prepare it for enduring with firmness, the trials of middle or declining life. Happy then are they who are thus early fitted by the grace of God, to meet his will in any of the distresses to which life is subject!

As to death, there is nothing but piety that can effectually disperse its terrors, or render it safe. And although youth are apt to place it at a great distance, and suppose themselves for many years safe from its arrest; yet, how often doth it seize them in the midst of their bloom, gaiety and hopes, and destroy them at once! And what is infinitely more dreadful than to be torn from life in its highest state of enjoyment, if taken unprepared, they are undone forever. If, on the contrary, they have by early piety, secured an interest in the merits of Christ, they are perfectly safe. They have nothing to regret, leave what they will behind them; since they are taken from the evil to come, and go "to be forever with the Lord." The consideration of such a state of security from the power of the last enemy, who in these circumstances, "after he hath destroyed the body, hath nothing more

that he can do," must be a source of the most rational serenity, and prevent a multitude of disquieting apprehensions, against which there is no sure defence, but the hope of eternal life.

To have this well-grounded in the time of youth, is to be fixed on a rock, which neither time nor death can remove. Thus, by early piety, while nothing necessary even for your present good is given up: every thing important for life and death is secured. By this every enjoyment is improved, and every affliction converted into an occasion of "working for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." This will render you honorable in yourselves, ornaments to your friends, to society, and to the church. It will fit you for acting your parts with propriety and dignity, in whatever station you are placed; will secure you the special counsel and care of God, in every situation through life; his presence and support in death; and then fix you in immortal youth, honor and bliss, among the "spirits of the just made perfect."

Should you neglect the present season, when every thing is favorable to the attainment of this blessedness, you will daily find new difficulties and discouragements coming in your way. Increasing cares, new projects and designs for the world, and above all, habits of sin daily strengthening, will bring with them new embarrassments.

While these will grow upon you, by insensible degrees, you will gradually become less thoughtful, your purposes and resolution will become weaker and weaker; till at last, you will probably give over all trouble and care about the matter; and settle into a fatal ease and security of mind, in which a neglected God may suffer you to remain, till your case be beyond remedy.

Your misery will then be sharpened by every comfort you have enjoyed, by every affliction you have suffered, and by every admonition you have neglected.

Or, should it please God, by a singular act of mercy, to interpose and rescue you from your danger in advanced life, which however no one has reason to hope for, after deliberately trifling and sinning away the season of youth, should that be the case, what difficulties will you then have to encounter, that would now be avoided; what agonies of conscience, at the remembrance of your wasted youth, and the mercy of God so long slighted and abused; and how often will you be filled with gloomy doubts of your state, and alarming fears of being left at last, by the God you so long neglected, "to reap the fruit of your doings!"

"Now then, is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

" Seize the kind promise while it waits,
" And march to Zion's heavenly gates,
" Believe, and take the promis'd rest,
" Obey, and be forever blest." *Watts.*

Having premised the great qualifications necessary for your acting a safe, useful, and honorable part in life, I proceed to the next thing in order, and that is—

II.—To fix early on some useful employment.

This is equally a matter of duty and importance, which I hope will appear to you, from the following considerations.

1. Action and business are necessary for the health of the body, and for cheerfulness of the mind. The body is so framed, as to require frequent and vigorous action to keep the several parts of it in a state suited to perform their respective offices to advantage, for the good of the whole. Habitual inactivity weakens the springs of life, nourishes the seeds of pain and disease, and is ever accompanied with a languor and flatness of the spirits, which always render life, in a measure insipid, and often tedious and burdensome.

Nor will amusement, however active and varied, be sufficient to preserve the mind in a state of cheerfulness, and calm enjoyment. Where it is incessantly pursued, as the main business of life, it ceaseth at length to excite any high emotions of pleasure, and more certainly fatigues and

wears out the spirits, than most of the usual employments of life, pursued for the same length of time.

In a steady application to business, should it be even of the harder and more laborious sort, while vigorous action keeps the channels of life open, and the moving powers of the body properly braced up, firmness of thought and resolution, joined to self-approbation and the prospect of advantage, serve to keep the mind in an habit of cheerfulness, to which the idle and dissipated are utter strangers. It is thus that "the labouring man's sleep is sweet, whether he eat little or much." And on these considerations it is, that no class of mankind seem, in general, to have more real enjoyment of life, than they whose circumstances oblige them to "earn their bread by the sweat of their brow."

2. Early employment is necessary, in order to make a competent provision against the evils of want and dependence.

These are circumstances to which no man can patiently submit, but either by an insuperable indolence, or meanness of spirit, or by hard necessity. Besides the hardships and sufferings of the body in a state of want, the mind is subject to distressing anxiety, to fretfulness, to secret murmuring against the providence of God, and often prompted to fraud and violence towards others, as

the means of relief. And therefore Agur, with great propriety, makes it a part of his memorable prayer, that he might be kept as well from the evils of poverty, as of riches, "lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." But seperate from these, which are the greater evils of such a state, the slights, grudging and insults to which it is exposed, are always painful and mortifying to those who have not lost their sensibility, by the habits of suffering. While "the rich hath many friends," to caress or flatter him, to the shame of human nature, "the poor is hated, even of his neighbors."

To provide against these evils is a duty which every man owes to himself; and will always be the aim of those who are possessed of any true greatness of spirit.

And considering how full our life is of accidents, that are calculated to disappoint our pursuits, and how liable every employment is to be interrupted by pain, disease, infirmity, and a variety of other circumstances, against which no prudence can defend us; it is necessary to begin early to business, and to go on with diligence, while we have the means in our hands. This is especially necessary for those who have nothing or little to depend on, but their own care and good management. To idle away the prime of life, in such circumstances, is an argument of a mind des-

titute of all prudence and forecast, and less attentive to its own good, than the inferior animals of the creation, who, as soon as they are capable, begin to do something towards their own support. What have such to expect, but to live always in want, without any just claim for those aids of charity, to which the helpless, and industrious poor are always entitled. "This we command you, saith the apostle to the Tessalonians, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." And it generally happens, that where men suffer in consequence of idleness and dissipation, they meet with less pity than others, and are more sparingly supplied.

Nor is early industry less a matter of prudence and duty, for those who begin the world, with the most favorable prospects. These are so liable to change, by causes, against which no human caution can provide, that he is very unwise, who trusts to their continuance, without endeavoring to furnish himself with some resource in case of the worst.

But, independent of other causes, the best capital on which a man can set out, must unavoidably waste, without attention and care on his part, to preserve it.

Many who might always, with a little care, have lived in ease or affluence, by an idle and careless youth, have been obliged at last, either

to depend on the bounty of others, or to set into business at a time of life, when every man would wish to be leaving it off.

A situation so much the more painful and mortifying to them, as they were once in a better, and have to charge themselves with the cause of their calamity.

3. It is an excellent defence against a multitude of temptations to which the idle are exposed.

It is the nature of the human mind always to require something to employ it. If it have nothing useful to engage its attention, it will certainly find something of a different nature. This is especially the case with young men, who are more strongly impelled to action than others, and more certainly run into excesses of one kind or another, if their activity be not virtuously directed. Under the influence of health, lively passions, and the love of pleasure, they are ever in danger, but especially when unemployed. It is in this state that the great foe of virtue and human happiness, finds them most open to his artifice, and ready to follow his suggestions; and he knows so well how to improve these circumstances to their ruin, that when he finds them, he seldom fails of his point. It is indeed highly probable, that some of the greatest evils which individuals and communities suffer, are the consequences of vicious principles and ha-

bits, contracted in the idleness and dissipation of early life.

Habitual employment by keeping the thoughts regularly engaged, not only prevents many irregular affections, and vain, if not vicious designs, but the evils of wandering and dissipation, which are generally corrupt morals.

While the planter is busied on his plantation, the merchant in his store, the mechanic in his shop, and the student among his books, tho' he should be destitute of virtuous principles, he has neither the same leisure to contrive evil, nor the same objects to excite it, nor opportunity of perpetrating it, as when he neglects his business, and is wandering from place to place.

His engagements in his calling are especially beneficial, as they serve to guard him against dissolute company, which is ever fatal to the principles and morals of youth.

In a word, though steady employment will not effectually secure you from temptation, or vice, it will certainly often save you from both; and the earlier you engage in it the less will be your danger of falling into that variety of evils to which idleness will ever expose you. And I cannot but remark before I dismiss this article, that the easier circumstances a young man is in, the more necessary it is, for the safety of his virtue, to be habitually well employed; and the reason is plain, the

more means he has of indulging to ease, dissipation and pleasure, the greater temptation he is under to do it.

In narrow and pinching circumstances, though the inclinations should be bad, for want of the means of gratifying them, and by the necessity of close attention to business, men are obliged, in many instances to check them, and so escape a number of temptations and vices, which a better situation would have brought them under.

In a state of affluence, or plenty, a young man is particularly exposed to the evils of much company, excessive amusement and diversion, clubs, entertainments, and other fashionable ways of destroying time, conscience, and happines; and especially so, if he intrusts the management of his affairs to others, and lives disengaged from care and business. Next to virtue and religion, the best defence which the rich can have against the peculiar dangers of their situation, is useful and habitual employment.

The last consideration to be now mentioned on the subject is,

4. That it is a duty we owe to others.

We are born in society; we depend on it for the safety of our persons and property, and are constantly in need of the good will and assistance of others, for some of the most valuable enjoyments of life. We are therefore bound, in return for

these advantages, to contribute such a part to the common good, as our places in society, and our abilities will enable us to do.

This we are obliged to as men, on the natural principles of benevolence and gratitude.

As Christians, we are bound to it by express and various precepts of the gospel. "Look not every man on his own things; but every man also, on the things of others."

"As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men," and above all, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." All which undoubtedly intend, that we should do something more than entertain benevolent intentions, and good wishes to the rest of mankind: These are first to be cherished, as preparatory principles, and then to be carried into execution, in the most extensive manner in our power.

Our relations, friends and neighbors, the destitute and afflicted, and the community of which we are members, are all entitled to a share in our good will, and to such services as we can properly render them.

But how is this to be done, without some profitable employment, that will yield something more than what our own necessities as individuals, or those of our immediate connexions, may require? Should we lead indolent and dissipated lives, we shall be so far from being able to assist others,

that we shall not have enough for our own necessities; and so liable to fall on the bounty of others, or make use of fraud or violence for our support, which is contrary to the first law of the social life, "to injure no one." It is therefore the duty of every one to be engaged in some way of life, that will, if possible, enable him to fulfil his obligations to society.

If the time of youth, which is the proper season for forming designs for future usefulness. be trifled away in idleness and dissipation, it is hardly to be expected, that much will afterwards be done, either for the community, their connexions, or themselves.

Should it even happen, which indeed is but seldom the case, that he who has wasted the prime of his days in vanity and idleness, recover himself and become a useful and industrious citizen, yet he must ever lie under the reproach, of having defrauded society, of the services he ought to have rendered it, in the time that he lost, and of having been, for the whole of that time, in some measure, a detriment and a nuisance to it.

On the whole, you see that early employment is both a matter of duty, and productive of the most important advantages; both the body and the soul are the better for it. And while it tends to independence and plenty, it furnisheth the means of gratifying a benevolent heart, in relieving the

distressed, and contributing to the common good. To which may be added, that under the direction of piety, it is an excellent preparative for the higher, more active, and important employments of a better life.

With these considerations deeply impressed on your minds, I hope you will be effectually guarded against falling into the ways of that destroyer, dissipation, by which to all appearance, multitudes in the bloom of youth, are daily falling from their friends and their country, into immature and irrecoverable ruin.

On the subject before us, it were easy to have enlarged; but flattering myself that what hath been said, will be sufficient to convince you of its importance, I proceed to another, no less interesting, and that is,

III.—The necessity of a prudent choice of company.

We are formed for society, are early inclined to it, and from it derive some of the principal pleasures we can enjoy.

But, in the same degree, in which in some circumstances, it is conducive to virtue and happiness, in others, it is destructive of both. A careful and prudent choice will secure the former, a careless and imprudent one will as certainly produce the latter.

You will easily understand, that I am not speaking of that general intercourse you must have with others in the common occasions of life, but of those particular connections you will form for the freedoms and intimacies of friendship, or for amusement and pleasure. In the former case you will have to mingle with men at large, as your particular employments and your duties to society may require. In the latter, you will act on your own inclinations and choice, and will therefore need so much the more caution and reserve. To give you as full a view of the subject as my present design will admit of, allow me to suggest to you the following considerations.

1. We insensibly adopt the sentiments and manners of those with whom we associate, on terms of affection and esteem. This is particularly the case with youth, who are fonder of pleasing, and more flexible to imitation, than those of advanced life. And from this circumstance, they have more advantages to expect from associating with those of virtuous sentiments and habits, and more injury to fear from the unprincipled and dissolute.

Indeed, it will be almost impossible to keep up an habit of intercourse with persons of either of the above descriptions, in that free and confident manner which is natural to youth, without being in some degree the better or the worse for it.

If you choose for your intimates, persons of just sentiments of religion, of a benevolent temper, and sober conversation and morals, you will naturally, from the desire of pleasing, be induced to conform yourselves, in a measure, to their way of thinking, speaking, and acting. As your love and esteem of them increase. your desire of imitating them will insensibly increase also, till you will probably, by degrees, become the same sort of person, and be fixed in the love and practice of the good qualities you discover in them.

On the same principle, if you associate freely with those of bad sentiments and courses, and especially if you enter with them into the intimacies of friendship, you will naturally be influenced to imitate them; and perhaps so much the more readily, as a bad example has commonly more influence than a good one.

If your minds have not been early seasoned with religious instruction, and impressed by the force of a serious and good example, you will so much the sooner be destroyed by your company.

But supposing a more favorable case, that you have had the best instruction, and the most persuasive example, and that under their influence you enter the world, in love with virtue and religion, and free from the taint of corrupt principles and habits; even in this case, so insinuating is bad example, and so flexible the heart to evil, that it

will be as difficult for you, especially under the prejudices of friendship, not to be less or more influenced by it, as to associate freely with persons under contagious diseases, and not be infected. And it will be so much the more difficult to preserve your innocence in such circumstances, as you are of a more benevolent and unsuspicious temper.

This, which is generally the temper of youth, and which is always improved by religion, will dispose you to compliances, for the sake of obliging, which though not criminal in themselves, may insensibly lead you on to those which are so; till at last your conscience and your peace may receive a dangerous, if not incurable wound. It is thus that many a youth of promising appearances hath been gradually corrupted, till all the fair blossoms of virtue and happiness have decayed, and fallen fruitless to the ground, while the hopes of parents and friends have perished with them. So true and important are the observations, "that evil communications corrupt good manners," and that "a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

It is of importance to observe to you—

2. That when bad connexions are once formed, it is no easy matter to break off.

The principal concern of youth in forming acquaintance and intimates is, to find those who possess sociability and gaiety of temper. The more

solid and useful qualifications of knowledge, taste, and virtue, are usually neglected. If their thoughts can be diverted, their spirits enlivened, and new scenes of pleasure and entertainment frequently presented, it is sufficient for securing their affection and attachment.

In these circumstances, blind to each other's faults, and insensible of the danger they are in; they seldom think of breaking off, so long as their favorite object of pleasure can be secured. The same principles which at first united them, will operate to continue their union, till either they meet with those with whom they are better pleased, or by some means are made sensible of the evil of their situation. But if it be difficult to see this amidst the caresses and blandishments of friendship, it is as much more so, to escape from it when discovered, as it is easier in general to see the way of duty, than to pursue it, and as the pleasures of amusement and gaiety have more influence on the heart than the principles of virtue and religion.

To relinquish the company of those who have often entertained us, diverted anxious thoughts, been the confidants of our free and unreserved sentiments, and our associates in various scenes of amusement and pleasure, requires more resolution than usually falls to the share of youth, or even of age. An unwillingness to offend those who ap-

pear to esteem us, and wish to make us happy, increases the difficulty, especially with persons of delicate sensibility, and generosity of temper.

And there is another circumstance which too often occurs, of fatal influence, in keeping young men fast in the chains of vicious and destructive company, which is this—that unprincipled and dissolute men are generally fond of increasing the number of their associates, in order to countenance their vices, and exert the more influence to bring virtue and religion into discredit, With this most criminal view, they practise a variety of arts, to keep in possession those whom they have entangled in their society. Arguments against the truth of the gospel and the obligations of religion, ridicule of gravity and sobriety in youth, jesting on serious and religious characters, and insinuations against the sincerity of all who make a profession of religion, even where it is most exactly supported, are all employed to their diabolical purpose. And these arts are the more successful, as they unhappily fall in with that fatal depravity of the mind, which disposes it gladly to embrace any thing, however false and unreasonable, that gives encouragement to vicious inclination, and serves to loosen the restraints of conscience.

Should it ever be your unhappiness to be drawn into the society of such men, consider them as "enemies of all righteousness;" who, to encou-

age themselves in a course of transgression, would destroy in your minds, the only principles that can preserve the good order, and existence of society, and save you from falling into eternal misery. From these considerations, it frequently happens, that when young men have formed bad connexions, they gradually lose all relish for better, and all just sense of their duty and interest, or even when sensible of their danger, find themselves under so many engagements, that they have not resolution to break through them. "Enter not then, into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it pass not by it, turn from it and pass away."

As another argument for a prudent and careful choice of company, I mention to you

3. That it is common to judge of men by the Characters of those with whom they associate, and it is a just and reasonable way of judging.

In the common employments of life, men are often unavoidably connected, whose principles and habits are in many respects, not only very different, but quite opposite. Yet even in this case where no particular friendship is necessarily supposed, they who value their characters will, if possible, connect themselves with those only, who are well esteemed, or at least, under no remarkable reproach.

In those voluntary associations which are formed only for the pleasures of society, the case is very different. These always presuppose a certain agreement in taste, sentiment and way of life, as the only foundation, and cement of such connexions. The idle and the busy, the sober and intemperate, the chaste and the impure, the serious and profane are too much unlike, to be habitual companions. Should such happen to be connected, the diversity of their inclinations and manner of life, must necessarily render them so unpleasant to each other, as to prevent a durable friendship, and intercourse. These principles are so universally acknowledged, that men do not hesitate to pronounce, that " a man is such as the company he frequents."

If your associates therefore, are persons of known sobriety and virtue, it will be judged that you possess the same qualities. If they are loose, dissipated and profane, you will be considered as the same sort of persons. And though aware of this, you should endeavor to keep up appearances, for sake of your character or interest; you will certainly be suspected of conforming to their vices, at least while you are in their company, and can hope to escape the notice of those, whose good opinion you would wish to gain, or preserve. And every man who has a just regard for his reputation, tho' he should be influenced by no higher principle,

will cautiously shun the company of men of ill characters, lest his own should fall under suspicion.

A good name is so satisfactory in itself, and attended with so many advantages, that he who is careless about it must be equally destitute of an ingenuous spirit, and a regard to his present good. More than this, he is insensible to the most powerful incitement to a just and laudable conduct, next to religion itself. And indeed, to be indifferent about the opinion of the world, especially of the worthy and virtuous part of it, is to be in the highway to dishonor, vice and ruin. Take away the restraints which arise from a regard to commendation and esteem, and there is nothing left, but the fear of punishment, by which human depravity can be deterred from the grossest enormities.

Be careful then, to preserve at all times, a respect to the good opinion of others, next to a reverence for your consciences and the authority of God. Never hazard your characters, for any gratification you can find in the company and friendship of dissipated persons; whatever figure they may make in the world; or by whatever arts or elegance their vices may be garnished.

You will illy forfeit the esteem of the worthy and virtúous, for the flashy and dangerous entertainments of dissolute company. And let me particularly remind you, that with all the other evils to which bad connexions will expose you, by the

loss of your characters, they will be a bar in the way of your advancing hereafter to distinction and importance in society. If your first connexions are with idle and vicious persons, though you should be happy enough to see your error and forsake them, you will not easily gain the confidence of those who knew your former way of life, and with whom it was spent. It will justly be concluded, that you will require time to correct the bad principles and habits you contracted from your company. Every one will be shy and backward to trust you, in any thing of importance, till you have given satisfactory proofs that you are fixed in new habits, and in reputable and virtuous society.

It has frequently happened, that a young man by the error of associating with disreputable company. at his first appearance in the world, has lost the most favorable prospects of business, interest and promotion, which he has never, by any exertion, been able to recover.

And certainly, the highest pleasures that can be enjoyed in dissolute company, are dearly purchased, at the expence of honor and esteem, influence and usefulness.

I shall conclude this address with the following directions on the subject before us.

1. In forming intimacies and friendships, be always cautious and slow.

Hastiness is a common error of youth; especially where the entertainments of society are concerned. Unacquainted with mankind, it is apt to be taken with the first appearances and professions of goodwill; without any apprehensions that they are generally nothing more than customary forms of civility and politeness; and often the covering of a disingenuous and designing temper. By this mistake, it eagerly runs into connexions, which it must either break off, with disappointment and shame; or endanger every thing important to its happiness. And to expose oneself to the former, without any prospect of solid advantage, must be the height of folly; and to the latter, little less than madness.

You cannot, then, be too cautious, in so interesting a case. Inform yourselves, as particularly as may be, of the principles, habits and characters, of those with whom you may be induced, to form an intimacy or friendship. And lest you should be deceived and misled, by trusting to your own judgment and prudence, be careful to advise with those, on whose friendship and knowledge you can depend. Especially, if you have parents, or guardians, make them your first counsellors. This you are bound to do not only out of respect to them; but for sake of your own safety. They are not only better judges of mankind, than you can be supposed to be, but, it may justly be concluded, that they have too great a regard to your

happiness, either to debar you of any reasonable enjoyment; or not to warn you of apparent danger.

By such a precaution, you may save your honor, your virtue, and your peace of mind. By rashly following the impulses of your own inclination, you may lose them all.

Should you be ruined by confidence in your own prudence and virtue, you will forever lie under the reproach of being your own destroyer.

Should you be deceived, after all the precautions you can make use of, you will escape the greatest of miseries, that of being obliged to accuse yourselves, as the authors of your unhappiness.

2. Should you form connexions dangerous to your virtue and happiness, I advise you immediately to disengage yourselves. I have already touched on the difficulties of such a task, and you will certainly find it as hard, on experiment, as I have represented, if not much more so. This I mention, not to discourage you, but to prepare you to act with the more firmness and decision, when you come to the trial.

To warn you is to arm you. Whatever obstacles may be in the way, from your own inclinations, or the enticements of your companions, from the entertainment and pleasure they have afforded you, from any respect you may suppose yourselves to owe them, from the sense of any fa-

vors they have done you, or their power of further serving you, whatever figure they may make, or however long they may have been your associates, you are without delay, to make your escape. And I urge you to this, the more warmly; because you may suppose it necessary, for sake of decency, and saving appearances, to do it so gradually, as to conceal your design, and so avoid giving offence, and incurring unnecessary reproach.

Could you fully depend on your resolution, this might be well enough. But, with most, the experiment would be hazardous, if not entirely fail.

If after you apprehend your danger, you should allow yourselves to meet them, at one time, and another, on the same terms of freedom and intimacy, you will be in danger of losing by degrees, your first resolution, till you are again entangled.

Follow then the first dictates of conscience and duty. To parly with temptation, when you perceive it, is deliberately to expose yourselves to guilt and misery, which will be so much the greater as you have run into it, with your eyes open.

Fear no slight, ridicule, or reproach, you may be likely to suffer, by so necessary a resolution. The esteem of good men, the approbation of your own consciences, and the favor of God, will infallibly outweigh all the inconveniencies it can possibly subject you to. Finally, in your common intercourse with others, and in your particular

intimacies and friendships, make it your steady aim and concern, to improve in the knowledge of mankind, and in those generous and benevolent affections which are necessary for your acting your parts well in society here, that you may be prepared for the society of the blessed hereafter.

This undoubtedly was the ultimate design of God, in enduing us with the social affections, and this is their highest excellence. Should you therefore, be misled by them, into error and vice, you will not only defeat, as I may say, this wise and gracious design of your Creator; but the great purpose of the gospel of Christ, which is, "to redeem you from the vain conversation of the wicked," and form you for an everlasting union with himself, and his redeemed family.

In a virtuous commerce and friendship with others, on the amiable and divine principles by which all his followers are to be governed, you will not only enjoy the highest pleasures that this imperfect state can afford, but you will be advanced at last, "to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born. which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant," where friendship and love shall be ripened into perfection. If on the contrary, you should be so lost to a just sense of your

duty and happiness, as to form your principal connexions, with vicious and ungodly men, you must expect to be joined to them at last.

Then all the kind and pleasurable affections of your nature, will be turned into hatred and malice; and they who have been associates in sin here, will mutually reproach and torment each other, in everlasting misery.

It is an established law of the gospel, that "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God"—And if they can make no part of that society, they are certainly unfit to be the associates of those who would wish and hope to be joined to it.

You see then, my dear youth, that every thing important to you depends on the company you keep; your own honor and that of your nearest friends and relations, your virtue, your usefulness, your peace of mind, and your eternal happiness, are concerned.

By all these then, and by the love of God and his son Jesus Christ who died to save you, I affectionately pray you, shun the society of wicked men, and form only such intimacies as are founded on virtue and piety, that each of you may be able to say, "I am a companion of all them that fear God and keep his precepts."

The remaining subjects within my plan will be considered in my next discourse. In the mean time, consider seriously, and faithfully, what has been said in this; and you will be prepared to hear me again, I flatter myself, with lasting advantage.

AMEN.

SERMON V.

PSALM CXIX. 9.

"*Wherewithal shall a Young Man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy Word.*"

YOUNG MEN,

IF my former discourse made any impression on your minds, suitable to the importance of the subjects it treated of; I shall the more certainly obtain your serious attention to this.

The advantages of early religion, of an early application to useful employment, and the necessity of a prudent choice of company, have been already considered and recommended to your serious regard.

The subjects of this address are, the government of the temper and passions, the evils of an excessive attachment to pleasure, and the great rule by which your hearts and lives are to be governed.

Each of these articles might well employ a separate discourse, but the limits which I have assigned myself, oblige me to dispatch the whole of them in this. I shall therefore attempt, under each, to collect the most important particulars, and enforce them upon you, by suitable arguments.

Of the passions or affections in general, it is proper to remark to you, that, so far as they are original parts of the human constitution, and in any degree lawful, as the principles or springs of all our actions and under the government of reason and religion, they are highly conducive to our own good, and that of others. On the contrary, all that are the consequences of the disorder and depravity of our nature, and so in every degree unlawful; or those that, though lawful in themselves, are indulged beyond their just and natural bounds, become highly injurious; either to ourselves only, or to others and ourselves, at the same time. It is the latter sort I mean now to consider. Of these I intend pride, envy, ambition, anger, malice and revenge. These are all founded in immoderate self-love; and, except the

first, are directly of a malevolent and vicious nature.

1. As to pride—without considering whether it be strictly ranked among the passions or not, I observe, that it is not only as unreasonable, as the worst of them, being in all respects, most unbecoming a fallen and miserable creature, but is productive of pernicious effects, both on the individual who is the subject of it, and on others.

It is unjust in itself, as all the advantages of fortune, body, and mind, which one man can possess above another, are to be ascribed to the bounty of God, independent of any merit in himself, as the procuring cause of them. "For who maketh thee to differ; and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

It is injurious to the possessor, as it renders him always uneasy, lest he should not be treated according to his importance in his own eyes, makes him suspicious of offences, where none have been offered, impatient of controul, resentful, liable to studied slights and insults from others, and especially offensive to God, "before whom, every one that is proud in heart is an abomination." As to its effects on others, besides indifference, haughtiness and contempt, which to most men are unpleasant and provoking, it often prompts to cruelty, injustice and revenge, which the proud suppose

themselves entitled to practise, in consideration of their superior importance.

In all respects, it is a mean and contemptible passion; a sure indication of want of knowledge, and solid worth, and which as certainly as any other vice, is one way or another, punished even in this world.

Humility, on the contrary, is ever sure of being respected, and always gains the most, where it claims the least. And what is infinitely more valuable than all, the honor and respect it can gain from man; it is ever of the highest estimation in the sight of God. For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of an humble and contrite spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the spirit of the contrite ones. "It is therefore better to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the great."

2. Envy. It has been said that this is the first of the injurious passions that operates in the mind. Whatever be the order in which it makes its appearance, it is in every degree criminal, and most opposite to all the principles of benevolence, and the constitution of the gospel.

The object of envy is always the good and happiness of others, whether it be their ease, wealth, reputation, influence, or any other circum-

stance of enjoyment. And it has this peculiar malignancy in its nature, to wish to lessen that happiness, though it should not, by that means, make any addition to its own. It even seems to be uneasy that there should be any happiness in the world, but that which falls to itself, since they who are under its influence, are dissatisfied with their superiors, for being in better circumstances, with their equals, for being as happy as themselves, and with their inferiors, for seeming contented and happy in their condition, and especially, if in the way of improving it to an equality with their own. The consequence of so malevolent a temper is, that wherever they look, they discover objects to offend and disquiet them. They are therefore, habitually fretful, gloomy and discontented; and so, incapable of enjoying what they possess, however sufficient for their happiness. Their secret disquietude and anguish, like a slow poison on the vitals, preys upon their spirits, and gradually consumes the powers of enjoyment, till their life becomes insipid and burdensome.* Solomon has therefore forcibly described it, in this view, as "the rottenness of the bones." And while it thus affects the envious themselves, it prompts to subtle and malicious methods of obstructing the happiness and prosperity of those

* There have been instances of persons being so affected by this passion, as to fall into lingering and incurable disease.

who are envied, to unprovoked resentments, defamation, injustice, and other injuries, equally dishonorable and criminal.

There is nothing indeed within the bounds of human malevolence which this vicious passion cannot perpetrate, when it has got full possession of the heart. And therefore, the wise man observes, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy." Through envy Cain killed his brother Abel, "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Joseph's brethren envying him for the particular affection of his parents, and the honor and respect which he had dreamed would be paid him, by all his family, sold him to the Midianites, to be carried into Egypt, as a servant forever. Saul envying David the glory he obtained by his victory over Goliah, pursued him with inveterate hatred, and hunted him for his life. And to name no other instance, because none greater can be named, moved with envy, at the miracles, authority and reputation of Christ, the rulers of the Jews persecuted him with unrelenting malice; and at last, delivered him to the Romans to be put to death. So great an evil is envy, and so necessary to be excluded from the breasts of all who would wish to preserve the peace of their own minds, and be clear of the guilt of destroying that of others!

In order to this, consider, that as far as some may be superior to you in any of the means of happiness, you may be superior to others, and that the same righteous providence which hath given you the particular advantages you enjoy, hath given to others, those which place them above you. There is therefore no more reason why you should be dissatisfied with others, for their enjoyments, whatever they be, than that others should be dissatisfied with you, for yours.

Consider also, that to envy others the happiness that God hath given them, is to find fault with the distribution he hath made of his favors, which is highly criminal in his sight, "who giveth no account of any of his matters."

Endeavor to be contented with your lot, whatever disadvantages may attend it. There is nothing will make you easier, in the most unfavorable circumstances, so effectually prevent all the motions of envy, and its attendant disquietudes, as this. Should you have no more than the mere supports of life, remember that the best of men have sometimes been destitute even of these—"both naked and without any certain dwelling place."

Consider how certainly an envious temper will render you incapable of enjoying the advantages that are in your possession; and disqualify you for those habits of benevolence which are neces-

sary for you, both as men and christians, and for that state of happiness hereafter, from which envy and competion will be utterly excluded. Cultivate a vigorous good will to all men, and instead of repining at their happiness, you will make it an occasion of increasing your own. With such a temper, if others weep you will weep with them, and your sympathy will be repaid with substantial pleasure; if others rejoice you will rejoice with them, and so your enjoyment will be doubled.

3. Ambition is also a turbulent and dangerous passion, against which it will be necessary for you to be as much on your guard.

This is sometimes called emulation—which in a qualified sense, is an argument of a generous spirit; and under proper regulations, highly useful both to individuals and society.

It gives animation and vigor both to the body and mind; and often produceth excellence in knowledge, art and enterprize, which without it, would never have appeared. It is however too commonly accompanied with envy, by which it is at least hurtful to those who possess it. Ambition in its customary acceptation, is generally attended with malevolence, in a less or greater degree, according to the objects to which it aspires. When it aims at distinction in wealth and figure, in fame of valor and conquest, in authority and dominion; and especially when it is intense and

violent, it occasions more disorder in the mind, and greater evils to society than any other passion. There is nothing, however mean and criminal in itself, or injurious to others, that it does not employ in its service. Dissimulation, flattery and falshood, bribery, injustice and cruelty, faction and tumult, bloodshed and desolation, are often made subservient to its purposes. Nor are the ties of friendship or even of nature strong enough to restrain it, when it is necessary to its views, that they should be broken.

Indeed, the greatest part of the history of the world is made up of horrid details of war, cruelty and massacre, produced by the phrenzy and madness of ambition.

But happy for mankind, there are few in circumstances to admit of prospects sufficient to excite it to that ferocity, which equally destroys, without hesitation or remorse, the rights and peace of individuals, and nations.

In the bulk of men, it aims at nothing more than to gain some trifling advantage in name or appearance above those who are in the same way, or condition of life, or to make a show of dignity and importance, above their real merit and circumstances.

The following are the more common instances of it; and therefore, most deserving of our attention. It prompts some to make a figure in dress.

equipage and manner of living, which they have not ability to support. By this unreasonable vanity, they often exhaust, in a little time, the fund they set out upon; and which with more moderate views, might have supported them with comfort, decency and credit. The consequence of which is that they are obliged to fall back, with mortification and dishonor, into circumstances which they before despised; and there perhaps, to continue. And it often happens, that they who have innocently contributed to its gratification, are involved in the ruin that follows it. The hireling and mechanic are defrauded of the reward of their labors, the merchant of the value of his goods, and perhaps the orphan of his portion and dependance.

It puts others upon wild and extravagant projects, which, if practicable at all, cost more in the execution, than they are afterwards worth; yet, when such men have set out in a favorite enterprize, they will continue in their error, to the detriment, if not ruin of their estates and families; rather than be thought destitute of spirit and perseverance; or weak enough to attempt that, which they could not effect.

By the same vanity, others engage in employments, and set up for offices, for which they have no competent qualifications; and the consequence is, that if they do not bring upon themselves con-

tempt; they are at least, not entitled to respect; whereas, with a just estimate of their talents and merit, in other occupations or departments, they might not only have benefited society, but perhaps have acquired distinguished reputation.

In these instances, if ambition be not attended with envy and ill will of others; it at least perverts the reason, and destroys the peace and enjoyment of the ambitious, and interrupts that order which is necessary for the good of society.

To guard against this disquieting and injurious passion, consider, how little figure and distinction in the eyes of the world, will avail to real happiness, while your minds are in a state incapable of enjoying it. If you had all the notice and respect that were ever gained by wealth, power, and office, it would be impossible for you to be happy, while you are so discontented in your present situation, as to be continually aiming at new honors, and pre-eminence. It is the nature of ambition to grow more restless and importunate, by every new attainment. Success in its pursuits is but new fuel thrown into the flame that is already too strong, and which must at length, consume the breast where it is kindled. If it were even possible for the objects of ambition to afford their possessors all that they wish for, yet, how soon must they vanish away, and be no more to them, than they were to others a thousand years before!

Affliction will render you insensible to their impression; and death will destroy the remembrance of them forever.

Distinction is at an end in the grave. "The honorable man and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator," lie on the same level with those who died unhonored and unnoticed.

Moderate your fondness for every thing that has no other good, but that which depends on opinion and caprice. "The world passeth away; and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

In the same degree as you aim at the things of another world, you will be cured of a passionate fondness for the imaginary advantages of the present. Endeavor to excel in virtue, in which there can be neither injury nor excess; and in which, to be superior to others, is only to be more honorable in the sight of God, and more happy in yourselves.

This is distinction worthy of a rational and immortal being; and will give you, in the most obscure condition of life, a pleasure infinitely more solid and permanent, than any you can derive from the exterior advantages of the world; though you possessed them in the highest degree, that human vanity has ever aspired to.

4. Anger or resentment.

Under proper restraints, this is not only lawful; but useful and necessary. It is, however a matter of no small difficulty to moderate it, so as not to go beyond the bounds of its natural and intended use.

Apt to be excited on sudden and unexpected occasions, it is less subject to the controul of reason, and sooner runs to excess, than most of the other passions. It is for this reason, that even in persons of an habitual good temper, it often rises to great excess, before there is time to consider its tendency, and call in the aids of reason or religion, to counteract it.

On the body, when excessive, some of its effects are, hurry and agitation of the spirits, trembling, weakness; and in some constitutions pain, apoplexy, and sudden death. On the mind, confusion of thought and reason, sometimes distraction, and always violent determinations. In consequence of these, abusive language, and other injuries far above the provocation which excited them. There is nothing indeed, which in these circumstances, it cannot perpetrate. The innocent as well as the guilty, friend as well as foe, are at these times, equally exposed to its fury. Even life itself has often been sacrificed to its impetuosity, in violation of the tenderest ties of friendship, and natural relation: friend has hastily murdered

friend, and brother destroyed brother. Thus "Wrath is cruel, and anger outrageous," and resteth in the bosom of fools."

To indulge it, after there is time for recollection and resistance, is as great a mark of folly and weakness, as it is criminal and hurtful. A wise man will endeavor to moderate it, where there is a just reason for expressing it, to suppress the first motions of it, where there is danger of its rising to excess, or entirely to prevent it, by avoiding if possible, those occasions that would be apt to excite it.

There are few indeed, so happy in the government of themselves, as to be able to do any of these as duty or prudence would point out—but it is certainly incumbent on every one, for sake of his own peace of mind, and that of others, resolutely to attempt them; and there are few of so irritable and resentful a temper, who might not by habitual care and vigilance, acquire the ascendency over it.

For this purpose, consider where it may be proper to indulge your anger at all, and if proper, to what degree. Consider how liable you are to mistake the nature of offences, and to over-rate the degree of their guilt; and also, in how many instances, for faults of your own, you may stand in need of the patience and good nature of others; and especially, of the forbearance of God, "be-

fore whom, if he should mark iniquity, who shall stand?" This latter consideration, if duly attended to, will produce the happiest effects.

Under an habitual sense of your daily offences against God, you will think less of those committed against yourselves, and be more ready to treat them with lenity.

It will be often prudent and necessary for you, entirely to overlook the faults of those who are under your management and authority. This will save you a great deal of useless vexation, and your resentment, when it must be expressed, will have the better effect. By finding fault with every thing you see amiss, and suffering it to put you out of temper, you will acquire an habit of fretfulness and anger, that will keep you constantly sour and unhappy.

When your anger has by any cause been excited, endeavor, as soon as possible, to recover your serenity. Though the greatest danger is generally, from the first transports of this passion; yet, when it is cherished, for any length of time, after the occasion which produced it, there is great danger of its rankling into malice and revenge. And it is worthy of your notice, that this is more apt to be its effect, in those who are slow and phlegmatic in their temper, than in the quick and fiery.

The latter are to be dreaded, only in the moment of their rage, the others most, after you would suppose them to have cooled, and forgiven the provocation.

It is an excellent precept of the apostle, "Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath." The force of which might probably depend on this consideration, that during the night, the mind being unemployed by those objects which entertain it through the day, is more apt to dwell upon, and to magnify real or supposed injuries; and to meditate measures of revenge. Or it might have reference to the time of the evening sacrifice, which was about sunset; and which required that all animosities and differences should be settled, before the solemnity could be properly attended. "If thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother; and then come and offer thy gift." This is certainly the strongest possible argument against continued anger and animosities, because it implies, that while our minds are discomposed and fretted with resentment, our religious offerings will not be accepted. Besides, he who lies down with anger and ill-will, has not only been unfit for the devotions of the evening; but will most probably rise with the same temper, and be unfit for those of the

morning also, a case certainly, of equal guilt and danger to the soul.

In the management of this passion, it will greatly assist you to consider often the evils that attend it, the disquietude, fury and rashness it occasions, the shame it will often put you to, and the repentance and self-reproach, you must exercise, if you would hope to be pardoned even by men. Make it a part of your daily devotions, to pray for a suitable temper towards others, under all provocations and offences. This will bring you into a habit of watching over your hearts; till you will acquire by degrees, at least, so far the government of this impetuous passion, as not to destroy your own peace, or be injurious to others.

And I particularly urge you, to endeavor to subdue it now while you are young, and your minds less liable to be ruffled and vexed, than they will probably be hereafter. Increasing cares, disappointments and infimities, may render you more suspicious of injuries, and induce a habit of fretfulness and intemperate resentments, that will make you not only contemptible, but wretched. "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." We come now to consider

5. Malice and revenge.

I have put these together, because the one almost unavoidably runs into the other.

Malice is properly continued anger, accompanied with hatred and ill-will. It is a black and malignant passion, which will allow no merit or good qualities, to those who are its objects. It disposes to misrepresent their best intentions, words and actions, and will make no allowance for their failings, however innocent and pardonable.

It prevents those good wishes and services which all men owe to one another, and without which the bonds of society must necessarily be dissolved. And what is still worse, it prompts to violent personal injuries; and takes pleasure to inflict them, however distressing to those who suffer them. When this is done, by way of satisfaction for injuries, real or supposed, it is properly revenge: And when I name this, I name almost the highest effort of a depraved and abandoned heart. It is the more vile and criminal, as it is deliberate, subtle, and determined in its measures, and therefore cannot plead hastiness of impulse, which may often be allowed as an apology for the violence of anger.

There is nothing indeed too black for such a temper, and no caution or vigilance can secure those who are its objects, from falling a prey to it.

From this view of these worst of passions, you will at once see the necessity of preventing them, if possible, from ever obtaining a place in your breasts. They are in themselves so deformed, and so effectually destroy those benevolent affections which form the dignity of the soul; and render it so unlike the standard of love and goodness, that you cannot treat them with sufficient abhorrence.

There is no injury you can receive, by whatever circumstances it may be aggravated, sufficient to justify you in repaying the authors of it, with malice and revenge.

Where it is your duty to obtain redress of any wrongs you may have sustained in your property, person, or reputation; pursue your measures with calmness and moderation of temper; free from that spirit of revenge which, in such cases, too commonly prevails, even where men act agreeably to the order which the public authority has prescribed. To prosecute those who have injured you, with a view to gratify your resentment, is as inconsistent with true benevolence, as it is contrary to the express statutes of the gospel. And yet, how common is it, for evil minded men, to put one another to unnecessary cost and trouble at law, chiefly with a view to gratify a splenetic and revengeful temper, while they justify themselves, and stifle the reproaches of conscience, by the pre-

text of acting according to the prescribed forms of the community they belong to? Thus "they flatter themselves in their own eyes, till their iniquity be found to be hateful." And so it will be at last, with this and every other vicious principle, however disguised for the present, by plausible appearances.

Let me particularly caution you against that false sense of honor, which is so fashionable in the world; and which, under a fair name, perpetrates the worst of crimes, that a malicious and revengeful spirit can occasion. This is so far from that true honor which originates in generosity and greatness of mind; that it is nothing but violent self-love and pride, producing impatience of the slightest injuries and affronts, and prompting to furious resentment, that can often be satisfied with nothing less than the life of the offender.

It is entirely in this that the practice of duelling is founded, than which, there is nothing more mean, criminal and cruel, that has ever been permitted in civilized and christian societies; and nothing more deserving of being banished from all good governments, by the heaviest penalties.

Let me beseech you, never to think it necessary for your honor, as it certainly never can be, to sacrifice to it, either your own life, or that of another, in this fashionable, but most guilty way

of murder. Should you fall in such a conflict, you would fall without hope—Or should you destroy your adversary, you would bring upon your souls, the guilt of despatching him, as a victim to your pride and resentment, with all his sins upon him, into the eternal world. And unless you should suffer the anguish of repentance, proportioned to so enormous a crime; and his blood be washed from your conscience, by that of the great atonement; you must bear it on your soul to the bar of God, where you would meet the revengeful spirit of your adversary to accuse you; and suffer with it the judgment, "of him, to whom vengeance belongeth." Cultivate that true honor which is founded in virtue and religion; and it will put you far above the meanness and cruelty of revenging yourself, at the expence of all that can be dear to your fellow creatures.

Finally consider, that while a malicious and revengeful temper will destroy the peace of your own minds, and render you the most dangerous members of society; it will entirely unfit you for the services of religion, and the enjoyment of God.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.—Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou

shalt heap coals of fire on his head." If your kindness should even fail of melting him into good will and love; it will at least justify you to your consciences and to God; and you must leave your adversary to "bear his judgment."

On the whole, as to the government of your temper and passions in general, consider, that in the same degree, as under the direction of reason and conscience, they will greatly conduce to your happiness: while they are moved by the impulse of present objects, without regard to the ends they were intended to answer in your constitution, they will be the occasions of innumerable errors and disquietudes, to your unspeakable misery.

Habits of good nature, moderation and patience, will place every thing around you, in a pleasant and agreeable light, while envy and pride, ambition, anger and malice, or any one of them. or any other untoward and irregular passion, will render you incapable of enjoying the most advantageous condition.

The due government of your temper and passions will not only qualify you to enjoy the comforts that a bounteous providence may afford you, with cheerfulness and delight, but it will enable you to bear the afflictions that may befal you, with evenness and fortitude.

Such an happy state of mind will also dispose you to those offices of good will to others,

which form so great a part of your duties, and from which arise some of the most solid and delicate pleasures, that human nature is capable of enjoying.

Accustom yourselves early to discipline your passions, and as you advance in years, you may expect the labor and pain of doing it will gradually lessen.

Remember that in the same degree, as the government of your hearts is necessary for your happiness in this world, it is also, for that of the world to come. It is impossible in the nature of things, that such a disorderly and turbulent state of the soul, as renders it unfit for the enjoyment of God here, should be capable of enjoying him hereafter, in that state where complete happiness depends on the unvarying order of all its powers.

Keep always before you, the precepts and example of the son of God, in whose life, you will find the most shining instances of love, patience and moderation. The more you attend to these, and the more you imbibe of those divine principles which influenced his conduct, the more certainly you will succeed in every amiable and virtuous disposition, till love to mankind will be your governing principle, next to that of love and obedience to God.

And to insure you all the comforts and advantages of subduing your passions, I recommend it

to you above all, to commit yourselves to the tuition and conduct of the spirit of God. After all the efforts of your own reason and resolution, this must be your main resource and dependance. "Lean not to your own understanding," you are carefully to employ it, but not to make it your trust.

"It is God who worketh in us, to will and to do of his own good pleasure." And this, after every experiment you will find to be your only hope. "Keep thy heart, with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted; forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

We come now to consider the evils of an excessive attachment to pleasure.

Pleasure is the idol of all ages of life, and all conditions of mankind, and while there is a capacity of enjoying it, no one can be indifferent to its impressions.

But, it is in the season of youth, when health and vigor of body, ease and cheerfulness of mind, and quickness of sensibility, peculiarly qualify for the enjoyment of it, that it is most intensely pursued; and as it is then, that the heart is most under its impression; it is then also, that it is most dan-

gerous to its votaries. Before I go farther, it will be proper to mention, that I am not considering pleasure in the largest meaning of the word.—Those refined enjoyments which arise from the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge; from taste and sentiment; from friendship and religion, can never be deserving of blame, as they cannot be pursued to excess. I intend those only which arise from the gratification of our animal desires and appetites; and the love of amusement.

The principal evils of pleasure, in this view, are

1. It impairs the animal powers and capacities.

These are fitted by the constitution of God, for a certain degree of exertion, or excitement; and it is only within this degree, that they can either yield their proper satisfactions, or be preserved in their natural strength.

However firm and vigorous the constitution, excessive gratification of the appetites, especially when habitual, will, by degrees, impair and destroy the system.

It occasions weakness, obstructions, pain and disease, which, if they do not immediately terminate in death, will certainly incapacitate the body, for its proper enjoyments and services.

It is thus, that multitudes of young men fitted by their constitutions, for a course of vigorous action, for toil, hardship and enterprize, are early

reduced to the infirmities of old age; to bear an insipid and wearisome life, in a state useless to themselves and others.

Some, indeed, by reason of extraordinary strength, are able to hold out in a course of habitual intemperance, to a considerable advance in years. But, for one such, a thousand are destroyed, before they have "lived out half their days." And, of those who survive their excesses, beyond middle life; there is scarcely one, who does not dearly pay for them, with a complication of bodily miseries.

Not only is the body injured by excess in the lower and grosser gratifications of animal nature, but also, by an intense pursuit of those pleasures which arise from various sorts of amusement. Of these, there are some that immediately affect it, by exciting to violent or long continued exercise, that wastes the animal spirits, and impairs the strength. There are others that affect the body indirectly, by throwing the mind into disquietude, vexation, and other irregular emotions, that gradually impair the health and constitution.

Among the former, the most usual in this part of the country is hunting, which, however innocent and useful when moderately pursued, is very pernicious by being too frequently practised,

and often continued till the strength and spirits are fairly exhausted.*

Among the latter, gaming is very pernicious, being always attended with anxiety, and often producing violent anger, and the vexations of disappointment, which cannot fail of disturbing the order and regularity of the animal functions. It is also injurious, by being often practised, at those hours of the night, when the body ought to enjoy the refreshment of rest and sleep. Its injuries to the health, are not indeed, usually, as soon perceived, or as violent as those of many other pursuits; but, they are equally certain, in one degree or another; and especially to persons of weak and delicate constitutions.

They who pursue them in these circumstances, are so much the more blameable, as they are the more liable to be affected by them. And even they whose strength of constitution renders them less sensible of immediate injury, ought to consider, that to impair their health, in any measure, by unprofitable pursuits, is to incur the guilt of sacrificing solid good, without the hope of equivalent compensation.

On the whole, wherever men pursue their pleasures as the main object of their pursuits; in

* The great quantity of under-growth and boggy ground, in this country, render this exercise very laborious; and being often pursued in very hot weather, breaks down many good constitutions.

whatever they are placed, health and vigor of body are easily sacrificed to them. Every instance of excess is, in a less, or greater degree injurious, and the oftener it is repeated, the more certainly it is destructive. A good constitution may bear it for a time; but sooner or later, it will sink under it.

Besides the injuries which an immoderate love of pleasure occasions to the body, it is also hurtful to the present interests of men, in the affairs and business of the world. "The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall cover a man with rags."

It is universally true, that when it is intensely pursued, business must necessarily be neglected. Care and useful employment can be regarded only as things of secondary moment, while the appetites must be gratified at any expence.

And while this is the case, honor and reputation must also be made a sacrifice. It is thus, that many who have set out in the world, with the best advantages, have gradually, perhaps in a very little time, sunk into reproach and disgrace, from which they have never recovered. "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man, he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich."

No expense indeed, is equal to the wants of men devoted to their pleasures.

They can soon exhaust the largest estate, where they are called upon, by the importunacy of a pleasurable disposition.

It is a consuming fire, which the more you throw into it, the more intensely it burns, till it wastes all within its reach.

And while it destroys all the interests of the body, and the reputation, which is still more valuable—it is also

2. Injurious to the acquisition of knowledge, and destructive of moral and religious sentiments.

It is hardly to be expected that he who is intent on his pleasures should be anxious for the improvement of his mind. These objects are so different, that the one must unavoidably clash with the other. And therefore it usually happens, that men devoted to their pleasures, seldom attain to distinction in useful and important knowledge. This requires not only elegance of taste; but retirement from the world, and steadiness of application; neither of which can be expected, where the love of pleasure is the reigning disposition.

Animal gratification, and trifling amusements, debase the inclinations, and create an aversion from those objects, in attention to which the understanding is enlarged and strengthened. The best natural genius must fall a sacrifice, where the mind is in love with pleasure, as its principal object. And so it has happened, that young men

of the most promising talents, have sunk, after raising the highest expectations, into a disrelish of every valuable pursuit and improvement; till scarce a trace of their genius and abilities has remained. It has even been the case, that the best capacity for knowledge, has sometimes been so impaired by the love of pleasure, as to be reduced to a state little better than idiotism itself.

This, if there were nothing more, is sad destruction of the great and excellent powers of the soul. But, the effects of pleasure are still more formidable. It destroys moral and religious sentiments. These are the highest order of our endowments and qualify us for enjoyments, as much superior to those which depend on our intellectual powers, as the latter are to the highest animal sensation. It is by these we are capable of acting from a sense of the authority of God; and with a view to his approbation, and the rewards of piety and obedience. This sense is the great rule by which our conduct, motives and enjoyments, are to be governed, in reference to the last and highest purposes of our being—And so far as it maintains its due authority in the soul, we shall be influenced to live "soberly," in the use of our appetites and passions; "righteously," in regard to the demands which others have upon us, and "godly," in the practice of those duties which we immediately owe to God himself.

Yet, great and important as this principle is, both for our conduct and happiness, an excessive attachment to pleasure has a direct tendency to render it entirely ineffectual for the ends it was intended to answer. And this is more certainly the case, where it is pursued in the gratification of the animal appetites. There is so great a difference between the principles of the flesh and the spirit, that it is impossible in the present state of human nature, they can be equally regarded. Where one is predominant, the other must be proportionably undervalued and neglected. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but, if ye through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The pursuit of sensual indulgence as the principal care and happiness of life, argues, that a sense of the authority of God, and a regard to his favor, as the highest good of a reasonable and immortal being, are over-ruled by the interests and demands of the body; and that the soul, as to its highest and most important exercises and enjoyments, is in a state of death. The apostle has therefore expressly declared, that "to be carnally minded is death." And we accordinly find, that, where the love of pleasure, in whatever it be placed, is the reigning principle of men, if they do not run into the grossest irregularities; they at least discover a dislike to the most impor-

tant duties of morality and religion, which evidently proves them to be "dead in sin."

The pernicious and destructive effects of excessive pleasure are still farther manifest, by this, that it often prompts men, for the relief of their consciences, and for pursuing their favorite object, with as little restraint and remorse as possible, to reason themselves out of the belief of a providence in this world, and a state of retribution in the next.

And therefore it usually happens, that your professed advocates for sensual pleasures, are either professed infidels; or approach as near to it, as a regard to decency and their characters will allow them.

It must still be granted, that an excessive love of pleasure may be compatible with just sentiments of religion. But, this concession is so far from weakening my argument, that it abundantly confirms it. For, how ruinous must be that passion, which is strong enough to outface the solemn testimony of reason and conscience, reclaiming against it! Let men think ever so justly, on the obligations and advantages of religion—while they are enslaved to this, or any other passion, the clearness of their knowledge serves only to illustrate the power of the principle that rules them.

They are in the same case with those of whom the apostle speaks, "who knowing the judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death; not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

Finally, it follows from the premises, that a life of sensuality and pleasure, whether it be pursued in a coarser or more refined way, is utterly incompatible with those pure and spiritual affections which are essential to piety and devotion.

While the heart is engrossed by those objects which are adapted only to the body, or serve to gratify the vanity of the mind—it is impossible it should take pleasure in the contemplation of the holiness of God, or those truths of revelation which are designed to mortify our love of this "present evil world;" or in those solemn and humbling approaches to the most Holy One, which serve to prepare the soul for the exercises and enjoyments of his immediate presence. Acts of devotion performed with such a state of the affections, are so far from being a matter of choice and delight; that they are ever attended with reluctance, disgust and pain. From this it evidently follows, that habits of intemperate sensuality, and of vain amusements, are as inconsistent with the character of a true christian, as it is impossible, at once, to "mind the things of the flesh," and "the things of the spirit," to be "enmity

against God," and "subject to the law of God;" or that the soul should be spiritually alive, and dead at the same time.

It is one great design of Christ, in "giving himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works."

And it is an essential part in the character of every true christian, that he is "washed, sanctified and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God"—which can never be said of those who are "deceived, serving divers lusts and vanities," without contradicting the whole tenor of the gospel. "So then, they that are in the flesh, under the tyranny of corrupt and sensual affections, cannot please God."

In addressing you on this subject, I am not insensible of the strong prejudices I have to oppose, of the warmth and impetuosity of youthful inclination; and the difficulty of convincing you, that what you have already judged to be your highest good, is, of all things, most dangerous to your happiness. Should you doubt the truth of the conclusions I have made, I appeal for proof of them, to facts, many of which most of you must have had opportunity of observing. Look almost where you will, in city or country, in the highest, in the middle, and in the lowest ranks of life, you may see the lamentable ruins of excessive

pleasure, you may see ruined constitutions, ruined characters and ruined estates and families.—You may see idleness, debauchery and neglect, if not avowed contempt of seriousness and the means of salvation, and you may see untimely deaths, and despairing death-beds, all in the dismal catalogue of its evils. These are all obvious to the eye. And could you look into the breasts of the intemperate sensualists, you would see raging and insatiate desires, sharp and torturing remorse, hatred of God, of Christ, and of the gospel; and as the consequence of these, often times, insupportable dread, and foreboding of the "wrath to come."

If the fruits of a life of pleasure were only those that have now been mentioned, how unworthy is it of the name, and how much to be dreaded! But these are not all. "The end of these things is death." All the miseries that can attend it, in this life, though often so great, as to render men quite insupportable to themselves, and impatient to terminate their wretched existence, will bear no comparison with those which are to follow, when the fugitive delights for which they are sacrificed, the solid pleasures of reason and religion, will be forever out of their reach; and every capacity of the soul filled with exquisite and everlasting anguish.

Tell me, then, I beseech you, what there is in the most exquisite pleasures of sense, of amusement and gaiety, that is worthy to be purchased at the expence of your souls?

Were they even to be perfect, for the longest duration you can hope for upon earth, or were they with the imperfections, vicissitudes, and pains that attend them, to continue for ages; in either case, they could never be a compensation for only the hazard of being miserable at last.—But since they certainly lead to final and irretrievable ruin, it is nothing less than madness to pursue them.

I will dismiss the subject after giving you the following directions.

Endeavor to inform yourselves of the true boundaries, and use of those enjoyments which depend on the senses. They are intended for important purposes, which they can answer, only when used in subordination to those which arise from knowledge, virtue and piety. And their subserviency to these is the rule by which they are to be judged of, as innocent and allowable.

And by the same rule, you are to judge of the lawfulness or expediency of any amusements to which you may be inclined. The design of these should always be to relieve the mind from the severity of our cares; with a view to pursue them again with alacrity and vigor. In any other view,

they are waste of time, and dissipation of thought, and how innocent soever in themselves, become injurious in the same degree as they divert the mind from the prosecution of our serious and indispensable duties.

Young men in health can seldom need amusements; especially where their employments are neither confining, nor require severe application of the mind. The business of planters in this part of the country, where few take any share in the labor, is little more than an agreeable amusement. To fill up the intervals of leisure from these cares, I recommend to you the reading of useful books. This will, at the same time, improve you in knowledge and taste, and fit you for acting a more respectable and useful part in the community. Should it answer no other end, it may at least save you from the temptation of adopting expedients to pass off your leisure hours, that may end in the ruin of your morals, and the peace of your minds.

Avoid all habits of indulgence that are not directly favorable to all the purposes of your being.

Whatever in the least degree interferes with these, is not only unlawful, but pernicious. Should you fall into habits of sensuality, in the time of your youth, you will probably continue in them, till the time of age, or what is much more proba-

ble, they will cut you off "in the midst of your days."

Let me particularly caution you against indulgence to the entertainments of the table; and especially to the early use of spirituous drink.*— Youth in general has not the least occasion of such a stimulus, and should therefore, entirely decline it, except in the time of sickness and indisposition, till the natural decays of the constitution.

They who habitually make use of it in early life, are in great danger of using it still more largely as they grow up, till the desire of it becomes too powerful to be governed by the rules of moderation. The effects of excess in this article are so formidable, that it should be guarded against, with the utmost resolution. It so inflames the appetites and passions, and so impairs the reason, that it prepares the way to "confusion and every evil work." Health, business, estate, reputation and the soul, are all destroyed before it.

Multitudes, of promising talents, who might have been happy themselves, and blessings to society, have fallen and are daily falling, untimely victims to this general destroyer of mankind.

Be constantly then on your guard against this greatest enemy to the body and the soul. Shun all amusements, and associations that would tempt

* I recommend to your perusal Dr. Ramsay's dissertation on the health of the inhabitants of Charleston, and the adjacent low country.

you into this way of ruin. Observe with attention the evils that attend those who are given to this excess; and though you should be influenced by no higher considerations, these alone can hardly fail of keeping you at the greatest distance from it.

Finally, cultivate a love for those pleasures which arise from the offices of benevolence to mankind, and the practice of piety towards God. In the latter especially you will find the most composed enjoyment, and such as will never cloy or disappoint you—The more you enjoy of these, the more you will disregard the pleasures of sense; which must ever grow weaker, the more frequently they are repeated. The contemplation of the perfections, works and word of God, and the other exercises of devotion by which the heart is improved in preparation for another and nobler state of being, will give you that peace of mind, and those cheerful hopes of future and eternal felicity, that are worth being purchased, for one hour, by the highest enjoyments of sense, for a whole age.

Nor need you despise any even of the inferior enjoyments of your nature, which God hath prepared for you, and allowed you to use.

But, it is only within the bounds which he hath prescribed, that they can be lawful, reasonable or safe. With the words of Solomon on a

particular case of intemperate pleasure, I conclude the subject, to which they may be universally applied.

"Let not thine heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

I am now come, much later than was at first intended, to consider—

II. The great rule by which your hearts and lives are to be governed. And because I have already, perhaps, exceeded the measure of your patience, will comprise what is necessary at present, to be said on the subject, in as narrow a compass, as its importance to your happiness will admit of. This rule is the word of God, of which in commendation of its excellence, the apostle saith; "All scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" and it certainly answers in all respects, to this incomparable character. It gives as full an account of the characters of God, and his dispensations to mankind, as is necessary for us to know at present.

It also contains a plain and full account of our

duties, and the principles on which they are to be performed.

As the first and highest of these, and the foundation of all the rest; it enjoins the belief of one God, that "he is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth," that we are to love him with all the heart, that is unfeignedly and supremely, to reverence his name, to obey all his commands; to submit with humility to all his dispensations; to trust in his mercy, power and faithfulness; to pray to him, for what we need; to praise him, for all we receive; to confess to him our sins; to seek his favor, as our safety and happiness, here and hereafter; and to refer all we enjoy, suffer and do, to his will as the standard, and to his glory, as the end of them all.

With respect to mankind it directs us "to love our neighbor as ourselves;" and whatsover we would "that others should do to us, to do even the same to them." To entertain a sincere affection and good will to all mankind; and to act towards them, in all cases, as we would think right for them to act towards us, were we in their circumstances, and they in ours—a rule intelligible to all capacities, and adapted to all the relations of mankind to one another. It includes all those acts of good will, mercy and justice, patience and condescension, which we stand in need of from one another; and which form, as so many links,

the great chain which binds men together, in a state of society.

With respect to our own happiness, it directs us to a sober and temperate use of our appetites and passions, in the enjoyment of present good, to be contented with our lot, without murmuring or distressing anxiety, in the most unpleasant and trying circumstances, and to set our principal affections "on the things that are above," and make it our main care and concern to secure these, as our portion at last. All these directions are delivered in various places, in plain, consise, and authoritative language. And in order to engage us to the steady practice of our duties, it also proposeth the most important and affecting motives.—The amount of these is, the promise of the special favor, protection and counsel of God, through the whole of life, support in afflictions, and the sanctified use of them, for the advancement of our spiritual good and comfort, and our preparation for another world, together with as much of the perishable goods of this life, as God shall see best for us—and a certain and everlasting happiness in the next. With respect to the encouragements to obedience, you will observe a material difference between those of the Old Testament and the New. In the former, they were immediately the advantages of the present life, though they no doubt, ultimately pointed to the next. In

the latter, there are no special promises of worldly prosperity, but of what is infinitely more valuable, spiritual and everlasting benefits. Indeed, the spirit of the two dispensations is so different; that in the same degree, as we hope for the special blessings of the gospel, we must be indifferent to the mere advantages of the present world. The same observation may be made, with respect to the threatengings against the disobedient. In the former, they are present judgments and calamities; in the latter, they point to the "everlasting punishment" of the final retribution. These observations are made with a view to guard you against the mistake of applying to yourselves the promises that were made to the Jewish nation, and which ceased on the coming of Christ, and the discovery of "a better inheritance," than was made known to them.

The special encouragements to faith in Christ, to the profession of this faith, and obedience to his commands, "through good report, and through evil report," are the promises of the pardon of sin, the sanctification of our natures, and an inseparable union with him, as the means of obtaining all necessary spiritual benefits, and the sure pledge of our being admitted at last, to "be with him, where he is, to behold his glory."

The scriptures also point out to us the true way of salvation. They inform us, that "Christ

died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

And that the benefits of his atonement are to be obtained only by faith in his merits, obedience to his laws, and the imitation of his example, in holiness of heart and life.

The gospel is founded entirely an these principles, which are plainly and forcibly laid down in the scriptures—That in consequence of sin, all men are liable to the pains of eternal death, that no repentance on the part of the sinner, is meritorious for his reprieve from the sentence passed against him, and that he has no power of himself, either to change the natural state of his heart; or to perform any service acceptable to God. And therefore, that the atonement of Christ was necessary, both for his pardon and sanctification, as the only way of his deliverance.

The importance of such a revelation to mankind will appear in the strongest light, by the following undeniable propositions—1. That the wisest and best of men who ever appeared in the world, with only the advantage of natural reason, were never able to discover with certainty, the state of men after death, or even that they would exist at all, nor the way of worshipping God, suitably to his true character; nor even just and rational ideas of his perfections and providence.

2. That no man previous to his embracing the gospel, either exerciseth true repentance for his sins, or expects the favor of God, as a mere act of mercy, or desires such an happiness in another life, as proceeds only from spiritual and holy affections, in this. So true it is, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" and that only through the medium of the gospel revelation.

If any thing therefore, can set forth the supreme excellence of the scriptures, and effectually recommend them to the esteem and veneration of mankind, it is, that they contain every thing necessary to be known and practised, in order to our present and future happiness, and that they are the sole standard by which our religious opinions, our temper, our conduct and hopes, are to be judged of as good or bad.

To this view of them, I might add, that they contain a faithful and most interesting history of the most important events that have ever happened. The creation of the world, the fall, the deluge, the re-peopling the world; after that memorable calamity, the division of the first language, the calling of Abraham, with whom the covenant of grace was first formally made, the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, the giving the moral law, written by the finger of God on two tables

of stone, the establishment of the church and polity of the Jews, by the express appointment of God himself, and his conduct towards that people, by extraordinary interpositions, till within about four hundred years before the Messias, together with the records of the characters of the most remarkable persons, in the course of this history, patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets, and the various prophecies, of the person, character, and kingdom of Christ, these are all to be found in the Old Testament. After that follows an account of the birth of the Son of God, with the most minute detail of time, place and other circumstances to attest its truth; then his doctrines, miracles and sufferings, during the time of his public ministry; then his death, resurrection and ascension; after that the public miracle of the gift of the holy spirit to his disciples, on the day of Pentecost; then the preaching, journies, sufferings and miracles of the apostles, till the finishing of the sacred canon, in the revelation made to the apostle John. All this vast history including nearly the time of four thousand one hundred years, is related in the most simple and affecting language; and its authenticity undisputed by all men of true learning, candor and piety. And I will venture to say, that for every thing great and interesting in narrative, as well as for sublimity of sentiment, and purity and excellence of morality,

it is infinitely superior to every thing produced by the mere wit of man.

And were it to be read, only with a view to entertainment, there is certainly no other book that can equally surprise and delight the mind, or move and affect the heart.

But, I hope the short view I have given of its contents and importance, will induce you to peruse and study it, from an higher motive; namely, to be instructed in your duty, in order to be happy in the favor and likeness of God, its adorable author.

Make it a part of your daily business to read this divine book with attention, and seriousness, suitable to its own dignity, and your interest in it.

In the historical part, pay the most attention to those facts which most illustrate the providence of God, in the punishment of disobedience and vice, and the rewards of virtue and piety, which most clearly evince his truth and faithfulness, in the fulfilment of his promises and threatenings, and to those especially which seem most clearly to refer to the deliverer of the world, and have a direct part in the accomplishment of the promises and prophecies that concerned him.

Most of these indeed are attended with some obscurity, but this will generally be cleared up, by one part or another of his doctrines or life.

The Old Testament is an introduction or preparation to the New, while this is a full vindication, and illustration of that.

The book of Psalms is an excellent collection of devotional exercises, adapted to almost every state of the heart, and every circumstance of the life. In reading of these, it will be necessary for you to consider the different spirit of the dispensation, under which the authors of them wrote, from that of the mild and forgiving temper of the gospel. Of praise, adoration, confession and penitential sorrow, of trust and confidence in God, you will find in them the most excellent examples, which cannot fail to affect and assist you, in all your religious exercises.

In the book of Proverbs, you will find most excellent maxims of wisdom and prudence for the conduct of life, in almost all the relations you can sustain. To treasure up these in your memory, to have them always in readiness for use, according to your circumstances, will be of great importance.

But, it is particularly in the New Testament, that I would have you to be most intimately versed. The doctrines of Christ are "the words of eternal life," his conduct a perfect example of benevolence and piety, and his sufferings and promises, the foundation and support of your hopes. What he taught is largely enforced and explained

by the apostles, in their different letters to the churches, and discourses on particular occasions; and all his excellencies that are intended for the imitation of his followers, his love, diligence, patience, humility and piety, are beautifully exemplified in their lives.

Of the doctrines of the scriptures, be most concerned to inform yourselves in those which lie at the foundation of the gospel, and are necessary for the faith and practice of all christians. With respect to these, allow me to give you one caution, and that is, never think of rejecting any of them, because you cannot entirely comprehend it, or solve all the difficulties that may seem to arise from it. Those very things which the pride and perverseness of our reason have laid hold of as objections against the whole of the revelation, are the highest and most infallible proofs of its authenticity. It is universally one character of the works of God, that they cannot be fully comprehended by the human understanding. If every thing were perfectly intelligible in the scripture, it would seem to want one essential mark of its divine original. You will find every thing necessary for you to know, sufficiently clear and intelligible.—And while you have enough both for your duty and happiness, you ought cheerfully to submit your faith to the rest, and think it sufficiently happy for you, to have a good hope, that if it

should be necessary, in some future period of your being, God will reveal to you even these things.

"All things are possible to him that believeth." With such a faith in Christ as will purify your hearts, and overcome the world, you will surmount all the weaknesses, errors, and corruptions, that now attend you; and by following the sacred light which he hath shed upon the world by his word and spirit, you will be daily growing wiser and better, till you shall "see him as he is, and know even as you are known."

To have such a blessedness in expectation, on the true grounds of the gospel, is an "hope that maketh not ashamed." The world will ever disappoint and shame you—Riches and power will disappoint you, honors and pleasures will disappoint you—wherever you look, you will see nothing but disappointment and sorrow, "vanity and vexation of spirit." But, with the oracles of eternal wisdom in your hands, and the divine spirit in your hearts; with your desires and hopes fixed on Heaven, and your labors and cares ultimately directed thither, you will find every thing turn to your good; and you will be fixed on a rock that will stand unmoved, when "the fashion of the world shall have altogether passed away, and all these things shall have been dissolved." I have now finished my design, and for the present

take my leave of you; not without a hope, that I shall share with some of you, in that blessedness, to the possession of which it was the view of this address to lead you.

AMEN.

APPENDIX.

An extract from a Sermon preached at Wappetaw, 1st day of January, 1790.

THERE is nothing in which we are more deceived, than the estimate we usually make of the few years of our duration upon earth, and the mistake seems to arise from the manner of our viewing it.

From the present time we commonly look forward to any definite period, taking the intermediate space in the gross, without regarding the divisions which compose it, and the hastiness with which the smaller run into the greater, till the whole is spent.

By this superficial way of reckoning, a few years, or months, or even a single one of them,

appears to us in prospect, much longer than it is; and admitting of much more business and enjoyment, than we ever find realized. And especially by this fallacy, the usual boundary of life appears to youth at a very distant remove; and that, supposing they should reach it, which almost every one expects, they will have had sufficient time for accomplishing all the schemes they have projected.

But how different is the view, when we take our time as it were to pieces, allowing to the several ways of passing it, their respective portions, and reckoning only upon that which can be employed in the main business that engages our attention!

Let us suppose that eight hours in the twenty-four are passed in bed, which is probably the case with a great part of mankind; that two are spent at the table; which is perhaps one less, than is taken by those who are in affluent, or easy circumstances, and that only two more are spent in relaxation and occasional pauses from our main pursuit.

By this computation, one half of life whether longer or shorter, is taken up with the necessary refreshments of the body, and reliefs of the mind.

Let us allow farther, the first seven years of our time, before we begin to think of any serious purpose, and nine more for making preparation for the part we are to act. We will then say, that at

sixteen we set out in the course of action that is to employ the remainder of our life, and that half of this is unavoidably lost from it. Out of a life of sixty years, it leaves but twenty-two; of one of fifty, but seventeen; and of one of forty, but twelve years for serious employment—If to this we should add the time that is lost by infirmity, sickness, and other interruptions—how small a portion of life is employed in useful pursuits, and how little is it to be wondered at, that so few of mankind attain to eminence, either in the improvements of the mind, or the useful works of human industry!

This serves to show us the importance of carefully improving that small pittance of our time which the weakness of our nature allows for useful application.

Could the whole of our life be employed to the highest purposes of our being, without any of the interruptions we now suffer, or were its duration many times longer than it is, or the business of it of no more consequence than to eat, sleep, amuse our minds, and consult our ease and gratification, we might in either case, be somewhat excuseable for that indolent and trifling way in which so much of it is wasted.

But, considering how much there is to be done, how short a space is allowed for doing it, and that our immortal duration must be happy or miserable, according as this space is filled up with useful, or

trifled away in unprofitable pursuits—to say nothing more it is inexcuseable folly to spend it in supineness or dissipation.

If the most serious and diligent see reason, at the close of life, to regret the loss of much unimproved time, how sad a review must they have, whose years are exhausted, before they have found out their value; or have done, or thought of doing, any thing above the purposes of a merely animal existence!

The preceding estimate of life suggests also to youth, the great importance of entering as early as may be, on a course of useful employment; and of improving their time with that scrupulous economy, that its shortness, and its reference to eternity, justly call for.

They may have many years before them, they may have but very few—And, as the latter is, for many reasons, the most probable, it ought always to be supposed. Just as long as our life appears to be in prospect, it will appear to have been short, in review, and as unimportant as it appears, in the former case, it will appear valuable in the latter; when such a view of it can only serve to shew the folly, and exasperate the misery of having neglected it. They who live well, be it ever so short, will have lived long enough; and they who live illy, be it ever so long, will die too soon."

SERMON VI.

THE HAPPINESS OF THE HEAVENLY STATE.

PSALM XVI, 11.

"*Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.*"

THERE is not, perhaps, in the whole extent of the sacred scriptures, any subject better calculated at once to animate the hopes of the pious, and awaken the attention of the thoughtless, than the happiness of the heavenly state.

The consideration of duty is not always strong enough to invigorate the former, and never has any influence on the latter. But certainly when the motive of duty fails in either case, that of reward will, in a lesser or greater degree, affect.

For this reason my design on this occasion, is to urge to diligence, the languid saint; and kindle the desires of the thoughtless sinner; to tread in that path of life which leads to fullness of joy in the presence of God, and to pleasures which are at his right hand forevermore. Some have ima-

gined that the Psalmist, in the three last verses of this Psalm, adopts a prophetic style, and speaks in the person of the Messiah. "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy-One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life, &c."

However this may be, there is an evident reference in the whole passage to the Psalmist's own case. It expresses his hopes and expectations, and while he contemplates the triumphs of the promised Saviour over death and the grave: while he beholds him in vision, or rather personates him, and speaks in his name as breaking up the mansions of the dead, and shewing himself as the first fruits of them that slept; he looks forward also to the manifestation of the sons of God, and to their final glory and happiness in the kingdom of heaven.

Considering the words with application to Christ, they promise that although he was destined to the suffering of death, he should not see corruption, nor be long the prisoner of the tomb.

In respect to the Psalmist himself, they imply his acknowledgment of subjection to mortality. He seems to have been standing on the brink of the grave which was shortly to receive him. Perhaps he felt all the gloomy apprehensions of that

land of silence to which his body was in a little while to be consigned; and all the humiliation of an expected dissolution in the habitation of corruption and of worms. But his soul was comforted with the cheering prospect of a glorious resuscitation and an eternal abode in the presence of God. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

Such my hearers is the hope of the sons of piety and religion: their toils and sorrows on earth shall be succeeded by an eternity of joy inconceivable in heaven.

In treating of this subject, I propose

1st. To enquire wherein the happiness of Heaven consists.

2d. To shew the perfection of this happiness, and let us all humbly invoke that Almighty spirit which calls light out of darkness, to enlighten and enlarge our dark and contracted minds, that we may in some happy degree, rise to the dignity and glory of the subject, and ardently long for that most desirable period, when we shall be freed from the darkness which attends the present state, and know and enjoy what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor is conceived of by the heart of man."

The happiness of the heavenly state will, I apprehend, consist in the full and perpetual en-

joyments of the same spiritual delights which the Godly experience in the present life. These may be reduced to the following particulars.

1st. Conformity to the moral perfections of God.

2d. The view of his glory.

3d. The sense of his love.

4th. Praising him and doing his will.

From these it was man fell—to these he is in some degree restored by grace, and will be perfectly in glory.

1st. Entire conformity to the moral perfections of God will constitute part of the happiness of Heaven. A resemblance of the divine nature, such as the rational creature is capable of bearing, and such as man bore at his creation, being formed after the image of God, is the only qualification for the enjoyment of pure and rational delight--and the latter will ever bear an exact proportion to the former. While the soul is in a state of entire disconformity to the moral attributes of God, it remains a stranger to that which constitutes its true happiness—but as it is born from above, to a likeness of the father of lights, it begins to taste and to enjoy spiritual pleasures. Let this impress of the Divine Image on the soul, grow to what degree soever in the present state, it is still marred and obscured by that "Law which is in the members continually warring against the law of the mind." But as far as it

takes place, just so far are the joys of heaven begun upon earth. And when sin with all its defilement and deformity, is entirely purged away, the soul shall bear an entire resemblance of him who is the perfection of beauty and excellence—"Beloved, says the apostle John, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appeareth, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

That view which the saints shall enjoy of God in glory, will transform them without spot or blemish, into his likeness. They shall be like him in the rectitude of their wills, and in the purity and holiness of their affection. What he approves of and admires, shall be approved and admired by them—and what he delights in, the same will be their rejoicing and delight.

2d. The second constituent of the happiness of Heaven is, the clear and unclouded view of the glory of God, by which I mean the united splendor of his various perfections. Of these the created intelligence can have a less or more extensive view, in proportion to the strength of its capacity---except of eternal existence, which is an essential perfection of God; of which the most exalted spirit will never be able to form any just conception. One of the most noble and exquisite satisfactions which the saints in this world enjoy, arises from the view of the divine perfections as they

are shadowed forth by the works of creation, and shine with unequaled glory in the book of Revelation---I beseech thee shew me thy glory, was the ardent and pathetic supplication of Moses, and is the genuine language of every saint.

Much of the power, wisdom and goodness of God, are manifest in the Heavens and the earth. Much of his justice, holiness and truth in the schemes of Providence and redemption, and of these every new discovery serves as a new source of delight to him who beholds and reads with pious admiration and love—but the highest discovery which the soul can make, while surrounded with those clouds of thick darkness, inseparable from the present state, are faint and obscure compared with the views it shall have when disincumbered of the clogs of mortality. Now, says the Apostle, we see through a glass darkly—but then, face to face, and we shall know, even as we are known. As soon as the clay tenement is thrown down, which is now as the dungeon of the soul, sight immediately succeeds the feeble medium of faith, and the glories of the Godhead shine with a more dazzling brightness on the ravished spirit, than the light of the noon-day sun does now on our bodily eyes.

Whether the spirits of the just made perfect in Heaven, have a direct and immediate view of the divine perfections, or whether they view them

through a medium suited to that pure, celestial state, we are not able to determine.

We cannot however at present, form any conception of the perfections of God, otherwise than by viewing them as reflected in his works. Thus we gain the idea of the divine wisdom by the harmony and beauty of creation, and by the order and connexion of events in Providence and redemption, &c. To me therefore, it appears probable that, in some such way, the saints shall behold the divine glory in the Heavenly world. Should even all the visible works of creation be entirely done away, yet Almighty power could impress the soul with a vastly clearer and more perfect view than we can now possibly have of them. Let us then suppose, that the blessed in the presence of God shall have a perfect and comprehensive view of all the wonders and glories of Creation.

With what growing astonishment and delight, shall they behold unerring wisdom and unlimited power, shining forth in the vast extent of the universe! How will their enraptured thoughts range at large through the numberless tribes of creatures, all subsisting in glorious harmony, conspiring to the good of the whole, and perfectly adapted to their respective places in creation!

Could we now have a perfect and comprehensive view of a rose, or a pink, or a single pile of

grass, there would be sufficient in the view to keep up perpetual and growing admiration and delight, and to furnish a theme for ceaseless and elevated praise to the Creator. With what heavenly wonder and delight then, will the enlarged spirits of the blessed above extend their views to the utmost bounds of creation; perhaps through millions of worlds yet undiscovered, and unthought of by mortals—and behold the perfections of the Godhead shining forth with a dazzling splendor and glory in all! Methinks were this the only employment of the blessed, it must furnish an overflowing delight worthy of the rational soul, and worthy of Heaven. But let us suppose further, what to me appears more than probable, that the saints in the presence of God, will have as clear and comprehensive a view, as their enlarged capacities will admit, of the whole scheme of Providence, with respect to the universe of created intelligence. Carried back perhaps, in imagination, to the beginning of creation—they shall be gradually led into the counsels of unerring wisdom, and be admitted to a clear and satisfying view of the intentions of the Almighty ruler, in every step of divine Providence, from the commencement until the completion of time. With what admiration and delight, does the pious observer of the administration of Heaven, in this lower world, discover a ray of light shining forth from the most dark

and enclouded dispensation, and apparent evil issuing to the real and extensive good of mankind, and the manifestation of the divine glory. And with what rapturous astonishment may we imagine, will the soul in the everlasting kingdom above, trace every event through the whole course of time, to some wise and good, and glorious purpose, in the unerring counsels of God.

The Psalmist while on earth, had such a view of the administration of divine Providence, as obliged him to cry out with a kind of exultation, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad, and the fullness thereof rejoice,"---And with what pleasing wonder may we imagine, he now reads the book of Providence, and beholds the wisdom and justice, and goodness of God; even in those dispensations which once appeared to him dark and perplexed, and wore the most gloomy and threatening aspect to the Church. How often is the afflicted saint ready to repine at those dispensations of Heaven, which strip him of his dearest earthly comforts, and disappoint his most sanguine and pleasing hopes. But how great will be his joy, and how ardent his praise, when he looks back on his heaviest trials, and views the tender care of his heavenly parent, in snatching from him those delights which if enjoyed, might have unduly attached him to the world, made him loiter in his course, and darkened his prospects of the heavenly state.

Views of this kind must certainly feed the soul with a ravishing fulness of joy, and elevate its praise to the highest strain.

Now the Almighty, as to us, makes thick clouds and darkness; his pavilion and his ways are in the great deep, where we cannot trace him, but in his presence, there is brightness without a cloud, and all his mysterious ways among the sons of men, appear without darkness or obscurity.

But whatever manifestations are made of the divine glory, in the works of creation, and the designs of Providence, it no where shines so illustriously, as in that most astonishing scheme of redemption, through Jesus Christ.

So great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, &c. that the angels earnestly desire to look into it. And certainly it is the most pleasing employment of the saints upon earth, to enquire into this heaven-derived divinity, in which the divine perfections are so gloriously displayed.

But after all their most enlarged views in the course of the longest life, how much remains wrapt up in mystery and darkness, not penetrable by mortal sight. The doctrines of the trinity, of original sin, and the vicarious sufferings and satisfaction of Jesus, though sufficiently supported by the authority of the divine word, are attended with difficulties which cannot now be solved, and must

be reserved 'till we attain to the perfection of the heavenly state. Let us then suppose, that what may now at times disquiet and perplex the pious and inquisitive soul, will in that state be gradually unfolded to its view, and constitute part of the fulness of joy, in the presence of God. With what amazement and delight may we imagine, will the blessed above behold the sacred three, though subsisting in different persons, united in one common nature, possessing one common glory, and conspiring in joint counsels of unerring wisdom, boundless goodness, inflexible justice, and unvarying truth. How will they wonder and rejoice at the manifestation of the divine wisdom, in admitting sin, the greatest evil into the world, and turning it to the most illustrious display of the divine glory, and the bestowment of a greater happiness on man than even Paradise could afford. How will they view the representation of Adam as the common head of mankind, making way for the representation of Christ as the common head of the Elect, and the sufferings of the latter; at once the noblest display of mercy, wisdom and justice! In a word what rapturous joy and delight must fill all the inhabitants of the heavenly world, while they behold the divine glory beaming forth with unclouded lustre, and scattering light and glory over the immensity of Paradise. And how cheerfully will they join in that ascription by the Church triumph-

ant. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty.

3. The third constituent of the happiness of Heaven is the assured sense of the love of God. To be the object of the divine love, is to be in a state of happiness—to be assured of it, is to enjoy the greatest happiness possible. The latter is the happiness but of a few perhaps on earth, but is of all in Heaven. The most agreeable seasons which the Saints experience in this world, are when their evidences of the love of God are the most clear and indubitable. Sometimes they are able to triumph over every perplexity and fear, and exult in the light of the divine countenance. Such happy seasons however, return perhaps but seldom, and they are often obliged to cry out, will the Lord cast off forever.

But when they lay aside this mortal part, and rise pure and unblemished to the immediate presence of God, they at once feel the perfect assurance of his warmest love. Being entirely freed from every thing that might create suspicions in themselves, or provoke the displeasure of their heavenly parent, they live and rejoice under the unclouded smiles of his face. There he manifests that early love he had for them, before the foundations of the world were laid. There they find no room for complaints of an absent Lord, or the frowns of an injured friend. No chastise-

ments there to reclaim a backsliding disciple, or subdue a disobedient child—but love in overflowing and perpetual streams, shed daily around from the throne of God; and every heart rejoices with a fulness of joy, in the assured sense of eternal love.

The 4th constituent of the happiness of Heaven, and the last I shall now mention, is

Celebrating the praises of God, and performing his will. When the soul is wrought into a resemblance of the divine nature, it views God as altogether excellent and glorious, and worthy of the highest ascriptions of praise. And in proportion as its views of his perfections enlarge, it delights to tell of his glory, and shew forth his wonderful works.

If this noble employment be the delight of the saints while on earth, it will undoubtedly bear a part in the happiness they shall experience in heaven. They will praise God for his uncreated majesty and glory, for all the displays of his wisdom and power, his holiness, justice and truth; and for all the riches of his grace and his love. They will praise the Father for his early purposes of mercy to an apostate world—the Son, for his unexampled condescension, and the invaluable merits of his death, by which their joys and heaven were purchased; and they will praise the Holy Ghost for his benign and sacred influence in beginning and perfecting in them the divine life, and

bringing them safe through all the hazards and labors of time, to the seats of heavenly joy and rest—Joined in one glorious concert, and fired with one common ardor of love, they shall lift up their voices in loudest hallelujahs, while a fullness of growing joy shall invigorate their love, and fill all heaven with acclamations of praise. Pure as flames of fire, and drest in robes of celestial splendor, they shall stand in the presence of the highest, wait for his commands, and with all the fervor of heavenly zeal, and joyful obedience, fly to dispatch his messages, and perform his will. Such are the noble and exalted employments of the blessed in the presence of God,

I proceed to shew—

2. The perfection of the happiness of heaven.

This we may consider with respect to degree and duration.

1. With respect to its measure or degree.

Our text expresses it by a fullness of joy, or such as leaves no deficiency or room to be filled up. How ever exquisite the joy of the saints upon earth, while with unshaken hopes they anticipate their inheritance in reserve; yet, their pleasure admits of much alloy, by the cravings of desires ungratified, and wishes unanswered.

But, when they arrive to the mansions of joy above, the whole capacity of the soul is at once filled up with the most rapturous delights. Were

impossible for a single desire to be left unsatisfied, their pleasure must be mixed with pain, and their heaven a state of incomplete satisfaction. What they most desire there, is to behold the glory of God, and be conformed to his will—And therefore, if they are perfectly conformed to the one, and have as complete a view of the other, as their finite natures are capable of taking in, their joy must be as extensive as their desires.

Besides, in the very nature of things, the soul cannot otherwise than be happy, in proportion as it bears conformity to God; so that if the saints above are entirely purified from the dross and corruption of their natures, they must be completely happy; and nothing that is unclean, we are told, can enter into the heavenly kingdom. Suppose we admit that the capacity of the soul will ever be enlarging, which cannot, I believe, be in the least doubted, yet it cannot extend faster than the fulness of the Divine Nature is capable of supplying.

In this world the satisfactions of the saints are embittered by corruption, sorrow and pain; marred by the concerns of time, the wavering and feebleness of faith, and the clouded prospects of futurity. In the heavenly state, where pain, sorrow and corruption; an imperfect faith, the concerns of time, and dark and clouded prospects are entirely done away, they have nothing to do but behold

the glory of God, and drink fulness of joy at the fountain of bliss.

2. The duration of the happiness of Heaven, which is another constituent of its perfection; were it possible that the spirits of the just made perfect above, might entertain the least fear that their fulness of joy would after the longest conceivable time come to a period, how would the thought damp and enfeeble their delights. Nothing more embitters the cup of earthly pleasures, than the prospect of its being some time exhausted. Were this the case in the upper world, what a bitter would intermingle itself with the most exquisite delights.

But as the soul is redeemed by the price of blood from everlasting misery, so it receives a title to everlasting happiness; or in the expressive language of sacred scripture, "Christ is become the author of eternal salvation, to as many as believe in him:" And when they arrive at heaven, they enter on full possession of the purchased inheritance. When the earthly house of their tabernacle is dissolved, they rise to an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

As soon as they enter the celestial gates, and take their seats among the choirs of angels and purified spirits, a bright and glorious prospect opens to their view, too wide to be comprehended by any but the eternal mind. At once they are ra-

vished with a fulness of joy, and pleasures which years more numerous than the finite understanding can reckon up, will neither diminish, nor bring near to an end. And when they shall have spent countless millions of ages at the fountain head of spiritual bliss, the fountain shall still overflow, and their pleasures still increase. Swallowed up in the immensity of the divine nature, and lost in an ocean of heavenly delights. Eternity to come shall furnish new bliss, and will have a weight of glory in reserve. Thus, once admitted to the presence of God, their crowns shall forever brighten, their glory be forever full, and their pleasures continue forevermore.

But here is a depth which angels cannot fathom here our imaginations are lost, and here we are obliged to stop.

SERMON VII.

EPHESIANS VI, 19.

"*And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.*"

THE apostle having enumerated the several parts of armour necessary for the christian, in his perilous warfare through the world, concludes his directions on this head, by recommending fervent and persevering prayer, as the most effectual security against a subtle and formidable adversary. And he directs the Ephesians to exercise this duty, not only for themselves, but the church at large—for all the saints, or true christians throughout the world. To this he adds a particular request of their intercession on his own behalf, that he might be freed from every impediment, and furnished with propriety of language, as well as spirit and confidence to publish the gospel, with fidelity, under every discouragement. A prayer most worthy of a man whose humility and zeal are equally conspicuous in all his writings—and highly necessary to the views of every one who

is engaged in the important office of publishing the gospel.

In discussing the subject offered by the text, I propose—

I. To make some remarks on the meaning of the word *mystery*, as it is applied in the gospel.

II. To shew what the mystery of the gospel is, and

III. What it is to publish it with boldness.

I. I am to make some remarks on the meaning of the word *mystery*, as it is applied in the gospel.

This head is of particular importance, in order to vindicate the gospel from the charges of unreasonable men, who, because they do not wish to believe it, endeavor to disparage it, as unintelligible and unreasonable, and therefore not entitled to the faith and confidence of mankind. If this were really so, our preaching and your faith would be equally vain; and our common hope of happiness must be relinquished, as a delusive phantom.

But I hope to shew you, that the mistakes of men respecting the redemption are the effects of their own ignorance, prejudice, and depravity; and not in the least chargeable upon any defect in itself. At the same time, it is our duty to declare, that the doctrines of revelation are great and admirable mysteries, into the true meaning

and spirit of which, human reason is not, of itself, capable of penetrating; but which, he who revealed them to the world, is able to make intelligible and saving, to all who are disposed to receive them.

The word mystery is used in this place, in evident allusion to certain religious rites in practice among the Heathen, which were called mysteries, or secrets, on account of their being performed in private, and their meaning made known only to privileged persons, who were bound not to reveal them, especially to the common people. They were therefore, called things not to be spoken. And this they well might; as some of them were such as both decency and morality forbade their disclosure. These are some of the unfruitful works of darkness, of which the Apostle says, it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

On the contrary, the mysteries, or doctrines and institutions of the gospel are so pure, holy, and important to mankind, that, instead of wishing to conceal them, there was nothing he had so much at heart, as to enjoy the privilege of publishing them freely and fully to all men.

The gospel in general is called a mystery, the great mystery of godliness, the wisdom of God in a mystery, in respect to its originating in the wisdom and counsel of God, and by him alone re-

vealed to the world. That nothing in the plan of the redemption could have been known by the mere light of reason, is, I think, sufficiently evident from this consideration, that none of the most enlightened of the Heathen philosophers seem to have contemplated, in their most laboured speculations, any one of its characteristic doctrines.—So that, when it was first preached among the Gentiles, the common people and philosophers were equally at a loss to understand it, and prejudiced against it.

The Athenians were the most cultivated of all the ancients; and yet, when Paul preached to them Jesus and the Resurrection, the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, the two most celebrated of their sects, encountered him; and some of them very gravely observed, he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange Gods. And having conducted him to Areopagus, the most famous judicature in the world, they said to him, "may we know what this new doctrine is, whereof thou speakest? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore, what these things mean." The result of an admirable discourse to them was that some mocked, and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter: and only one of their number became a convert to the doctrines of the Apostle. Such is the reach of human wisdom in its highest state of cultivation! Phi-

losophy wonders at the gospel, as a novelty; then mocks and cavils, and then dismisses it, as unworthy of further notice, because its dim, distorted eye is not able to penetrate its meaning.

This leads me to remark, that all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel are mysteries in respect of their belonging to an order of truths that lie entirely remote from the observation of the senses, and to which there is nothing so analogous in the natural world, as to conduct the mind, in any train of reasoning, from the one to the other. Some of them, such as the trinity of persons in the godhead, the incarnation of the second person, the mystical union which subsists between Christ and his church, and the resurrection of the dead, are of such a nature, as to be quite beyond human comprehension. We are therefore to consider them as facts, forming essential parts of the christian system, and to be received and acquiesced in, on the general evidences which authenticate the holy scriptures.

There are other doctrines, such as the atonement by the sufferings of Christ, the operations of the holy spirit in changing the heart, and directing, and comforting the faithful, and the certainty of a future judgment, that are capable of being so far understood, as to afford the most rational conviction of their importance, and become a powerful principle of moral and religious con-

duct. The general reasons of their propriety and utility may be understood by any man, who will give them an attentive, and unprejudiced consideration. But as practical truths, they are to be effectually understood, only by experience: and this experience is a feeling of the heart, rather than a perception of the understanding: the latter is chiefly employed on the reasons and grounds of the gospel: it is in the heart that faith and every other principle of piety originates, and becomes productive. So, God shines into the heart, when he imparts the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Christ. So, the Lord first opened the heart of Lydia, and then she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul. This opening of the heart is the producing in it, an effectual conviction of the truth: and this conviction is illumination; it is the light of life.

This leads me to remark again, that the gospel is a mystery, inasmuch as the true meaning, importance, and excellency of it, can be disclosed, and explained to the heart, * only by the holy spirit. For, as no one knows what passeth within a man, but his own spirit; so no one knows, and therefore, no one can explain the things of God,

* Having the eyes of the heart enlightened, Ephes. i, 18. is a very ancient reading, and superior, I think, to the common. It is that of the Latin, and of Amelote's French translation. It is also agreeable to many other passages.

but the spirit of God. With whatever strength the external evidences of the gospel may appear to the understanding, the internal life and spirit of it must ever remain in impenetrable mystery and darkness, unless the spirit of Christ make them intelligible, by his own teaching and culture. It was for this purpose that he promised to send him to his disciples, after his departure, to teach them all things, and to bring all things to their remembrance, that he had said to them. And in this important and most benevolent office he is still employed, in favor of all who seek him, and rely on him, for that purpose.

This circumstance forms a peculiar excellence of the gospel, as the effectual knowledge of it does not depend on strength of talents, or attainments of education; and therefore, the unlearned, who form the great mass of mankind, are as capable of understanding it, as the wisest and most cultivated in human science. In fact, talents and science do nothing at all, in producing that practical sense of divine truth which constitutes the christian: It is solely the gift of God. So, the apostle directs the Corinthians, who set too high a value on those advantages which had no effect in promoting the gospel, to take notice how things stood with themselves. Look at your calling brethren, that is the state of the church among you; there are not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not

many well-born. * And this has generally been the case, in all times and places.

The gospel is a mystery farther, in respect of the manner in which God saw proper to dispense it to the ancient church.

From the first promise of Jesus Christ, under the character of the seed of the woman, it has been constantly preached to some part of mankind, down to the present day. But, previous to his manifestation, this was done by obscure and figurative representations of his personal character, and offices; the sufferings he was to endure; the kingdom he was to set up; and the benefits he was to bestow on all who should become his faithful subjects; these were shadowed forth to the Israelites, by various things in the service both of the tabernacle and temple; and spoken of in a great variety of passages in the writings of the prophets. Though the faithful undoubtedly understood them, so far as was needful to their salvation; yet, their ideas of the Messiah were attended with much obscurity; and the body of the people understood every thing respecting him, in a secular sense, and remained under this mistake to the very last. They earnestly longed for him; but it was for sake of the temporal prosperity and glory they expected he would confer on the whole

* In the original (Eugenois.)

nation. And so strong, and universal was this delusive prejudice, that the disciples themselves appear to have labored under it, till after the resurrection: and probably, in some measure, till the day of Penticost. To this I may add, that the circumstances of the birth of Christ; the obscurity in which he lived for thirty years; his entire rejection of the advantages of the world, from making any part of his scheme; the private and unlettered character of most of his first disciples, and apostles; and the reserve he generally used, in speaking of himself, even to his disciples; are all so entirely the reverse of what human wisdom would have contrived, and adopted, as apparently calculated to defeat the ends of his coming into the world, rather than to promote them, that they are only to be resolved into the sovereign counsel of God, who had arranged the whole plan, and fully relied on his own measures, for carrying it into execution. Thus, the foolishness of God is wiser than men *, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. It may be remarked further, that there are two events in the history of the gospel, which the apostle several times calls a mystery; I mean the rejection of the Jews from their visible relation to God, and the introduction of the Gentiles to all the privileges and benefits of the gospel. God,

* As men judged, on human principles.

says he, by revelation, made known to me the mystery which, in other ages, was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to us his apostles and prophets by the spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus, by the gospel. They were certainly included in the promises respecting the Messiah, previous to the formation of the Israelitish church; and their gathering to him had been frequently mentioned by the prophets. But, these promises and predictions were understood to mean nothing more than their becoming subjects and tributaries to the Jews, under the temporal reign of their Messiah Prince. So that, when Peter was directed, by a special revelation, to go to Cornelius, he complied with some reluctance; and it was several years after this event, before the Jewish converts could be reconciled to receive the Gentiles, in a free and brotherly manner. It proved, indeed, the cause of much animosity and schism in the church, and gave the apostles a great deal of trouble. And with respect to the other event, the rejection of the Jews, the apostle says to the Romans, I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, that blindness, in part, hath happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. This also had been foretold, as early as the time of Moses. But, both events took place, in a manner so con-

trary to outward appearances, and previous circumstances, that they could not be accounted for, on human principles; but were necessarily referred to the secret and sovereign counsel of God; who doeth what seemeth good to him, both in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the Earth.

There are some particular applications of the word mystery, with noticing which, I shall conclude this head.

After our Lord had delivered the parable of the sower, and retired from the multitude, his disciples requested him to explain to them what he meant. He replied, to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. That is, the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which were then disclosing to the world, from that secrecy in which until that time, they had lain. In this instance, his parable intended the method of God's dispensing his grace to mankind, and the different effects the gospel would have, according to the different tempers of those who heard it. While he thus explained himself to his disciples, who were desirous of instruction, he left the others to put their own sense on his discourse; knowing that a more explicit declaration of his doctrine would only have strengthened their prejudices against him, increased their guilt, and involved him in unnecessary difficulties: A principle on which every attentive reader

will observe him frequently to have acted, in the course of his public ministry. In the epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle, after discoursing on the intimate relation between the husband and wife, and their mutual duties, accommodates his doctrine to the union between Christ and his church. This is a great mystery! but I speak of Christ and the church. He had just before said, in terms very highly mystical, we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. This is a doctrine of singular consolation to every true believer; and yet, is no more to be comprehended, than the secret ligament which unites the body and soul. In the first epistle to the Corinthians, near the close of his discourse on the resurrection, he says, Behold, I tell you a mystery,* or secret; we shall not all sleep, or die, as men usually do; but we shall all be changed. The doctrine was a mystery in two respects; it does not appear ever to have been mentioned before; and when declared, was not capable of being comprehended.

From the preceding remarks, to some, it might possibly, on first sight, appear, as if God had left mankind under insuperable disadvantages, in a

* Out of twenty-five places where the word occurs, it is used fourteen times by the Apostle, in his letters to those churches that were chiefly converts from Heathenism—to whom, consequently its meaning was familiar enough—when used to the Jews, it probably alludes to the concealed meaning of their typical rights, and signifies a vail or curtain.

matter of infinite moment to their happiness, by not reducing every thing in the scheme of redemption, to a level with the human understanding.—But, when it is considered, that the external evidences of the gospel are sufficiently clear, to convince every unprejudiced mind, that it is certainly the work of God; that it contains a plain, and complete system of moral duties; and that these are enforced by the most rational and persuasive motives that can affect the heart—and when it is farther considered, that God has freely offered his holy spirit to supply every defect on our part; and to lead all who seek him, into all the truth that is requisite to be known, in order to salvation. I see not what more can be desired.

The truth is, my brethren, that all the objections that are raised against the Gospel, on the ground of the obscurities that attend it, are mere cavil. Its light is already stronger, than they who are prejudiced against it can bear; and if all of its obscurities were cleared, they would be prejudiced still the more. If the dawn be so painful to their eyes, how much more so would be the light of noon? This, says Christ, is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men have loved the darkness before the light, because their deeds were evil. And if they shun the light that is already given them, of what use would be more, but to aggravate their condemnation? If our gos-

pel be hidden, says the Apostle, it is hidden to them who are perishing; among whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, hath not shined unto them.

It is prejudice, passion and the interests of this world, joined with the delusions of Satan, that render men incapable of understanding the Gospel, and not its obscurities. Let them, therefore, first clear themselves of these impediments, and come to the light with an honest and teachable heart, and they will no longer complain of difficulties and darkness. Especially, let them endeavor with sincerity to practise the precepts of the Gospel, against which there can be no objections, but such as arise from a depraved heart, and they will find all the light that can be necessary to their salvation. For, if any man be willing to do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be true. Ye are not willing, said Christ to the prejudiced Jews; to come to me, that ye might have life. It was freely offered to them, but they disliked the terms. The purity of his doctrines offended their corrupt principles, and this offence kept them in fatal darkness. And the same principles still operate to keep multitudes in blindness, who live under the clear beam of the sun of righteousness; and this blindness being voluntary,

while it remains, there is no remedy. But to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness; and this light will shine more and more to the perfect day. Here, indeed, at the best, they see but darkly in a glass;* but they shall see enough to guide their feet in the way of peace: And when they arrive at the regions of perfect light, they shall see face to face, and know even as they are known. This shall be the reward of the upright, who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

We come now—

II. To show what the mystery of the Gospel is, that is, what are the doctrines it inculcates, as necessary to be known and believed, in order to salvation.

Under this head, I can but touch on the variety of particulars that will necessarily come before us.

The whole scheme of the redemption is founded in the necessities and miseries of mankind that have resulted from the fall. To all these the grace of God hath accommodated itself, in the most precise and abundant manner, by the gift of Jesus Christ, with whom he hath also freely given us all things. We shall therefore here consi-

* Here we see but the obscure images of future things; there the things themselves, in direct and distinct vision.

der the penalty of sin—the moral depravity we have incurred—the acquittal and the restoration.

1. The penalty of sin.—This, in its first sense, is the death of the body; for the sanction enforcing the prohibition which was given to Adam was in the day that thou eatest of the forbidden fruit, thou shalt surely die. Though he lived near a thousand years after the transgression; yet, from that fatal moment, the principles of death began to operate in his body, and so continued, till he returned to the earth from whence he was taken. With this part of the penalty are connected all the infirmities, pains, diseases, and wasting labors, which affect the body; and all the vexatious cares and sorrows which harrass the mind in the varieties of our external condition. These, in whatever form they come, or from whatever cause they immediately proceed, are to be considered as the penal consequences of our apostacy.

The other part of the penalty is, the death of the soul—that is, the loss of the favor and presence of God, and the privilege of free communion with him, which constituted the chief happiness of the state of innocence; and in which consisteth the true life of a rational and moral creature. And, as no limits were set to the penalty in the denunciation, it clearly implied that it was to be eternal. The body was to die, without hope of restitution to life; and the soul to be separated from God,

without hope of regaining his favor. And in both these respects, the penalty is denounced against all men, because all have sinned.

Next to this is to be mentioned,

2. The moral depravity. This is not to be considered as any part of the penalty of sin; since God can, in no sense, be the author of moral evil. Besides, the depravity commenced before the act of sin, in the desire of committing it. From this first desire has sprung that formidable train of corrupt affections, errors, and disorders of the soul, which have ever since attended mankind, and have rendered them so unhappy. It shows itself in a strong dislike to the restraints of the divine law, and the holy services of piety; in untractableness of the will, corruptness of the affections, and violence of the passions, and in eager and persevering attachments to the gratifications of sense, even under the most sensible effects of their pernicious natures, when too freely indulged. It is strongly displayed in that malevolent state of the heart which produceth wrath, envy, revenge, unmercifulness and cruelty, injustice and tyranny, offensive wars, and a delight in the ravages and desolations of society. And perhaps, in no case, does it more strongly appear, than in that deliberate violence which men offer to their consciences, when they suggest to them the guilt and danger of their sins, and would kindly check them in their career to

ruin. This presumption is a crime in which every man lives, who enjoys the gospel, and yet refuseth his faith and obedience. If aversion to a pure and spiritual worship, such as God requires—if want of faith in the gospel, under the best advantages to understand it—if contractedness and malevolence of heart—if a preference of the interests of the body to those of the soul, and of this world to a better—if these be proofs of depravity, then is man depraved indeed. And that this is no groundless charge, let us hear the testimony of the scripture, from whose impartial decision there is no appeal: "There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one. Their mouth is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Such then, are the maladies of our nature; an universal evil, and beyond the reach of human remedies. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint; and from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is nothing but

wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. Bad, however, as the case is, it is not hopeless, since there is a remedy provided that fully reaches it, and which is effectually applied to all who are willing to receive it. This leads us to mention—

3. The acquittal. The sentence of death having been incurred by sin, the justice and honor of God required that it should be executed; and this must have taken place in its full extent, had it not been prevented by the interposition of Jesus Christ. He voluntarily offering himself to become a mediator between God and man, and being perfectly qualified to sustain that important office, was accepted of the Father, and "became the propitiation for our sins, bearing them in his own body on the tree, and suffering, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

In these circumstances, we are certainly to consider him as a true and proper sacrifice for sin; for on no other principles could his suffering be consistent with justice, or important to the world. But "being wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace having been laid upon him, we are healed by his stripes." So that God can now be just, in justifying, that is, acquitting from all their sins, those that believe in him. This takes off the sentence of eternal death, but the body must still suffer, and at length die. Yet, how far these tem-

porary evils are to be considered as penal, with respect to the christian, on whose behalf Christ hath discharged the debt of sin, may, I think, be questioned. To him, all things shall work for the best, ultimately increasing the blessedness of the future state. Even death will be to him a release from sin and suffering, and the entrance to immortal life. But, by virtue of the death of Christ, death itself shall finally and universally be abolished. "For, as by Adam, all have died, so," in this respect, "by Christ, shall all be made alive;" for, "there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust; and so death shall be swallowed up in victory," and the whole human race fixed in a state of deathless duration. They shall rise indeed, to very different ends; for "the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Against the former, the denunciation of the law remains in its full force, and the penalty must be executed in its full extent: while the latter, by virtue of their union with Christ, shall finally escape all the effects of the apostacy, and "shall feed on the tree of life that groweth in the midst of the garden of God," complete in righteousness.

This acquittal from the penalty of sin, while it takes away the curse and all the disabilities that attend it, at the same time puts the true christian into a state capable of enjoying all the benefits of

the redemption. The offender not only obtains his life and release, but the full rights and immunities of an innocent citizen. And this brings us to—

4. The restoration. By sin, we at once lost the image of God, in which the soul was created, and the capacity of serving, and enjoying him, as well as forfeited all the inestimable advantages which would have belonged to us, had Adam our federal head continued in innocence to the end of his trial. By Jesus Christ we regain them all.

It would not have been sufficient for our happiness, merely to have been acquitted from the positive penalty of sin; it was absolutely necessary to complete our salvation, that we should regain those moral abilities of which sin had deprived us. The regaining of these is called "being born again, sanctification, a new creation," and by other terms which express a consecration of the soul to God, in the exercises and habits of piety. And this change to a new state of life is effected by the energy of the Holy Spirit. "We are washed, we are justified, we are sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God."

In connexion with this, and as the consequence of it by the constitution of the gospel, we obtain the high privilege of being adopted into the family of God and considered as his children, and so en-

titled to approach him as a father, to express to him our necessities, to put ourselves under his protection, to look for his guidance through the perplexities of the world, and finally to expect the inheritance of heaven. "On as many as believed in Christ, God has bestowed the prerogative of becoming his sons: and if sons, then they are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; provided they are ready to suffer with him, that they may also be glorified together with him."

By these benefits we not only acquire, as it were, a new personal character, having new views of divine truth, new principles of action, new hopes and expectations, and new labors and pursuits; but enter into such a relation towards God, as must infallibly insure everlasting safety and felicity. "I give unto them," said Christ, meaning his disciples, "eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Still more, if more there can be—"My father who gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my father's hand." Thus, all that was lost by Adam, is made up by Christ; and infallible security given, that it never can be lost again. But in order to obtain this incomparable blessedness, it is indispensibly required that we believe in Jesus Christ and keep his commandments. By faith in him, I mean not only a persuasion of the truth of his character, as

exhibited in the history of the gospel, but a firm reliance upon him for all the benefits he hath tendered to us. This is necessary on our part, as the consent of the heart to accept of salvation on his own terms, and an acknowledgment of his truth and fidelity. It is indeed an essential part of moral obligation to all who hear the gospel; for, "this is the command of God, that we believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ." And he himself says, "this is the work of God, that ye believe in him, whom he hath sent." No work unaccompanied with this, can be in the least available to eternal life, or so estimable in the sight of God, as to secure any expressions of his favor beyond the mere advantages of this world. Yet faith, however required and necessary, is the work and gift of God, and so has no influence whatever, as an act of righteousness on our part, in procuring our salvation; it is all of grace.

It is farther necessary, that we keep the commands of God; "and his commands are not grievous." Ye are my friends, said Christ to his disciples, if ye do whatsoever I command you; "and if ye keep my commandments, then are ye truly my disciples." These commands are the same in substance with the original law of our nature, comprehending all those duties which arise from our present condition, in relation to God, to mankind, and to ourselves. To God we owe our venera-

tion, love, submission to his will, and a rational and fervent worship; to consecrate to him our bodies, and our spirits; to thank him for his mercies; to confess to him our transgressions, and to confide to his sovereign pleasure all our concerns. To mankind we owe justice, mercy, forgiveness of injuries, and every office that benevolence to their happiness can inspire, and that is within our ability to perform. And we owe it to ourselves, to endeavor after every rational advantage of this life, in subservience to the happiness of that to come; in the proper use of present things, and the steady pursuit of every branch of our duty, in reference to the will of God, and the attainment of the great ends of our being. These obligations are so far from being weakened by the doctrine of salvation by grace, that they receive from it additional force. And it being the design of the gospel to train up men, by a suitable discipline, for another state of being; and the laws of God being intended both to point out the course of life, and to regulate the heart, it is the immediate effect of a true faith, to attach the christian to the laws of the gospel, as expressing the will of God. So that no profession can be genuine, that is not accompanied with an habitual regard to the authority and example of Christ, so far as the latter was intended for our imitation. To hope for salvation, either in licentiousness of life, or in that meagre, unani-

mated morality, which consists merely in decorum of manners, or in punctuality in the "forms of godliness without its power," is an hope equally ungrounded and ruinous. No, Heaven is not so to be obtained: but he that would arrive there, must "use all diligence to make his calling and election sure," in conformity to Christ; and resolutely forcing his way through all opposition, must be a "follower of them, who, through faith and patience inherit the promises." This will secure him peace here, and glory, honor, and eternal life hereafter: while they who "obey not the truth, but hold it in unrighteousness, shall experience indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; and shall finally "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

This, my brethren, I believe, is the substance of those great and important doctrines which are contained in "the mystery of the gospel;" and which the ministry is appointed to publish and recommend to the faith and observance of mankind, as "the words of eternal life." This consideration, if you duly attend to it, cannot but awaken in your breasts the most serious concern, that "you may not receive the grace of God in vain: Wherever it is dispensed, it will infallibly prove either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, to every one who hears it; there is no medium.

Your part, therefore, is to take heed how you hear, that your souls may live.

We are now come to consider—.

III. What it is to make known the mystery of the gospel with boldness.

The word in the original, answerable to boldly in the text, signifies freedom from all restraint, as well as confidence and boldness. The apostle useth it in the most general sense; but I shall confine myself to the latter. And certainly, if there be any cause, in which a man ought to shake off all timidity, and be regardless of danger, it is that in which the honor of God and the happiness of men are so much concerned, as the promotion and success of the gospel. Yet, such is the weakness of human nature, that, with the strongest conviction of the truth and importance of the gospel, and the best intentions to do good, men have not always that firmness to stand against the prejudice and opposition of the world, which are necessary in the discharge of so high a trust, as that of preaching it. Some from a peculiar delicacy of system, and others from distrust and diffidence of themselves, are apt to be easily discouraged, and to shrink back from slight and ridicule, from resentment and contempt. But, these are the most excusable causes of faint-heartedness, as they are involuntary and not easily overcome. And, I may add, that where they are accompanied with uni-

form evidences of integrity and fidelity, they are less apt to injure the interests of truth, than many other causes of irresolution.

I shall mention the following things, in preaching, as directly contrary to that boldness which it requires.

The first is, great care and anxiety in laboring and dressing off compositions intended for popular use. This too commonly proceeds from a desire to hit the fastidious and wayward taste of those who hear rather as critics and judges of composition, than as lovers of truth. It seldom, however, fails of bringing the preacher under the suspicion of consulting his own reputation, more than the promotion of the gospel, and the benefit of his hearers. Besides, there is generally such a languor, stiffness, and want of energy in such discourses, as to disgust persons of a sound taste; and to render them ineffectual to the principal ends of preaching. At the same time, it is the duty of every preacher to aim at such select and appropriate language, and such a method of discussing his subjects, as to convey his ideas in the clearest manner, and recommend the truths he delivers, most effectually to the heart. The doctrines of the gospel are so dignified in themselves, and so interesting to mankind, that when delivered with clearness, and a warmth and animation, inspired by the subject, they make a strong-

er impression on the susceptible and ingenuous hearer, than any of the embellishments of art, whose effect is always slight and transient; and if the heart be not interested, it is of very little moment to please the ear, and entertain the fancy. To aim only, or principally at this, betrays a want of confidence in the native strength and beauty of the heavenly doctrines, and a deference to the prejudice of the world, that can never be consistent with that respect which is due to the truths of eternal wisdom, or that manly firmness in declaring them, which their high importance and the majesty of their author demand. The scriptures every where present unequalled sublimity of sentiment and embellishment of figure: so that where ornament is required for illustrating and recommending the truth, there is no source from which it can be so advantageously drawn as from them. But it must come unsought, be used sparingly, and applied with promptness and propriety, or it will fail of its proper end.

Let me mention in the next place, as contrary to the boldness requisite in preaching, the keeping back and concealing such doctrines as are particularly obnoxious to reproach and ridicule, either through the common depravity of mankind, or the taste of particular times and places. It cannot be dissembled that there has too often been a fashion in divinity, to which preachers have

conformed, out of complaisance to the prevailing taste of their hearers, rather than to the standard of the scriptures. The doctrines of original or imputed sin, of regeneration, of the operations of the holy spirit, of sanctification, and some others, of equal importance, have too frequently been passed over in silence, as if they were no parts of the christian system. This is, in effect, a mean and treasonable surrender of them to the enemies of the genuine gospel, through the fear of incurring the reproach of fanaticism, puritanism, or something else of as disreputable a name. For I cannot be persuaded that any man of proper furniture for a critical study of the holy scriptures, which it ought to be supposed every preacher is of an impartial and diligent application to them, can fail of finding in them the aforementioned doctrines; to me, they appear to be written there, with the clearness of a sunbeam: different preachers may vary something in their manner of explaining them; but all who preach the gospel as delivered to us by Christ and his apostles, will substantially agree, both in their true meaning and importance. If, instead of these, the people are put off with a flimsy declamation on some barren topic of morality, it is defrauding them of the substantial bread of life, and deluding them with the juiceless husks of heathenism. This is rank cowardice, and admits of no apology.

Lastly, it is contrary to boldness in preaching, so to soften the offensive doctrines of the gospel, and the language of the scriptures, as to break their main strength, and render them less formidable to the feelings and apprehensions of mankind. There are some whose consciences will not allow them entirely to suppress any of those doctrines, to which they acknowledged their assent, previously to entering on their ministry, who yet state them in such a manner, as to give them quite a different aspect from what they bear in the scriptures: this is to compromise between the truths of God and the prejudices of men; and in a great measure to defeat the ends of the gospel. God has certainly expressed his will in that manner, which he saw best adapted to answer the purposes of a revelation; and he has a right to expect, that they who undertake to explain his word to others, will do it, as near as possible on his own plan. Every preacher of the gospel is bound to speak out plainly, whether in stating doctrines, or denouncing the sanctions of justice; that he may not be found guilty of taking away from the things which are written in the book of God. At the same time it is his duty to endeavor, so far as fidelity to his trust will admit of, to conciliate a favorable hearing to the truths he delivers. Men are to be treated with tenderness and respect, and to be gained over to the side of the gospel and their own

happiness, by those methods of persuasion, of which the scriptures have abundant examples. They are to be instructed with plainness, to be induced by argument, and admonished with prudence and calmness. This they have a right to expect, and benevolence to their souls, as well as respect to the example of Christ and his apostles, will directly lead to it—but no sacrifice of truth is ever to be made.

I think it may be confidently believed, that God will never permit any conscientious minister of the gospel to fall into errors of doctrine, dangerous to salvation. Let him, therefore, labor with all care, to discover the true sense of the scriptures, and then let him boldly declare it, whether men hear or forbear; whether they smile or frown. In the faithful discharge of his trust, let him resolutely meet every inconvenience, to which it may subject him: and he shall finally hear from Christ, that rewarding plaudit—Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. But if any one shall be ashamed of Christ and of his words, of him shall the son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.

If the gospel, my brethren, be a mystery, which can be effectually explained only by the Holy Spirit; and if the ministry be an external mean, appointed in subserviency to it; then, it is unques-

tionably the duty of all who enjoy this mean, to give it all due attendance. It can never be supposed, with any face of reason, that God has instituted a method to bring men to salvation, and yet left them at liberty to neglect it, if they please, and be blameless.

Such a supposition would imply, either that he has done an unnecessary work, or that having done that which was needful, he is indifferent about the success of it: either of which is charging him foolishly, and amounts to blasphemy. No, if they will not attend the gospel, when sent within their reach, they must unavoidably fall into the condemnation of loving the darkness before the light; and so proving their deeds to be evil.

I will conclude with offering you the following short directions, which I hope you will think of importance.

The first is—do not absent yourselves from the public dispensation of the word, for slight and trivial reasons. If it be the duty of your minister to use all carefulness, so to prepare himself for his public exercises, as he shall judge best adapted to your edification; you owe it to God, to yourselves, and to him, on all occasions to attend him, when other concerns of a stronger obligation for the time, do not interfere. The interests of the soul are pressing, and the season of grace is short and precarious; so that you have no time to lose.

With diligence in your attendance on the public means, and an earnest desire to improve them to the best advantage, you may hope to make daily progress towards the kingdom of God. But if indolence, amusement, or the cares of the world are suffered to seduce you into negligence and indifference about the divine institutions; you must at length, with the loss of the world, lose your souls also. And, "what is a man profited, though he should gain the whole world, if he lose his soul?"

Permit me to direct you again to cultivate a taste for the plain and substantial truths of the gospel, rather than for subjects of more curiosity and amusement, than use. The latter may please you for a moment; the other will advantage you forever. It is a depraved and sickly appetite that requires spicery and high seasoning. The healthful system can relish the simplest diet, and turn it into nutriment and life. Under a stated ministry, a great variety of subjects will of course come before you; make it your study to turn them all to the purposes of practical religion, and then they will become to you the bread of life.

Let me direct you, in the last place, to examine for yourselves, whether the doctrines which you hear, be the doctrines of God. Whatever confidence you may place in your minister, as you are to be saved by your own faith, take nothing on his authority that you are capable of examining for

yourselves. The scriptures are the only rule by which you are to be guided now, and judged hereafter; it is therefore your duty to search them, that your faith may rest on your own conviction. This will give you confidence, and him pleasure, as a proof that he has not labored among you in vain, and spent his strength for nought.

As we pray for you, that you may be steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord; so do you intercede on our behalf, that utterance may be given unto us, that we may open our mouths boldly, to make known the mysteries of the gospel. AMEN.

[The preceding Discourse was delivered at the ordination of the Rev. JAMES ADAMS, at Dorchester.]

SERMON VIII.

JOB XLII, 6.

"*Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*"

IN reviewing the conversation of Job, with his three friends, who had come to condole with him in his affliction, we find him at one time cursing the day of his birth—at another, reflecting on the conduct of divine providence, particularly with regard to himself—again, extolling his former character and conduct, and the unusual prosperity which had attended him, and in general, strenuously vindicating himself against the accusations of his friends, who seemed zealously engaged to support the wisdom, justice and clemency of the divine dispensations. Though these miserable comforters, as he calls them, undoubtedly argued on a wrong principle, viz. that unusual afflictions were arguments of uncommon guilt, and erred exceedingly in applying it to the case of Job himself; yet, it is equally evident, that the

discomposure and anguish of his mind had always prevented him of seeing things in such a light as would have silenced every complaint, and made his affliction much more tolerable.

At last, however, the Almighty God himself, makes his appearance, and puts an end to the controversy. On which Job, convinced and overpowered by the light and majesty of the divine discourse, retracts and acknowledge his errors in these words:—"Who is he that hideth counsel with knowledge? therefore I have uttered that I understood not. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore, I abhor myself," &c. &c.

Would to God, that every one who hears me this day, was not only almost, but altogether such an one as Job, when he vented this pathetic language, excepting his afflictions. To excite in your breasts, if possible, my hearers, something of that severe self-reproach, and unaffected penitence, which he seems to have felt, is the immediate design of this address. In order to which, we shall endeavour,

I. To explain something of the nature of repentance, as a religious act of the soul.

II. The duty and necessity of it.

1st. Repentance may in general terms, be defined that act of the soul whereby a person, from a view of the folly, indignity, ingrati-

tude, and dangerous tendency of sin, is affected with self-reproach and sorrow, on account of his past offences, and imploring the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, determines, as far as possible, to avoid it for the future, and yield universal obedience to the divine law. In this description, there is no more taken in than what seems immediately to precede, or follow after repentance, as the cause or lasting effects of it.

1st. A person in order to a due repentance, is affected with the folly and unreasonableness of sin. And indeed there can be no greater evidence of folly, than to do that for which no good reason can be assigned, and which is so far from answering the expectations of the agent, that it defeats the very ends he has in view, in the perpetration of it; and makes him more uneasy and dissatisfied than he was before. As there is nothing restrained by the laws of God, from the use of man, but what would be injurious to him, if obtained; and nothing enjoined upon him, but what would be for his real advantage, if complied with, his neglect in the one case, and violation in the other, is an evidence that he acts inconsistently with his own happiness. If we add to this the disappointment, vexation, and remorse which generally follow sinful practices, and above all, the sentence which is past against them by the righteous law of God; it must appear to be the highest absurdity

and contradiction that can possibly happen. When a person has seriously viewed it in this light, he cannot but reproach himself for acting a part which reflects the highest dishonor on his reason—a part worse than which a creature could not be capable of acting, which had not one ray of reason to guide it. To hazard the soul for any temporary gain, even for that of the whole world, is to add madness to folly; but to hazard it for the short enjoyment of a day or an hour, is folly beyond all description.

2nd. I suppose that in order to repentance, a person must be properly affected with the consideration of the dishonor that sin does to the constitution and government of God. The farther we are able to look into the divine law, the more readily we subscribe to the words of the Apostle, that "the law is holy, &c." But he that sins against this constitution, does in effect, say, that it is not good, or at least, that it lays too great a restraint on the liberty of the subject, or imposes upon him what he either need not or cannot do, and so is arbitrary and oppressive. So that every neglect and violation that the sinner is guilty of, does implicitly reflect on the wisdom or justice, or goodness of God, or, on all of them together. When a man comes to view his conduct in such a light as this, he sees himself contradicting not only the universal sense and most express de-

clarations of the Scripture, which every where does the highest honor to the divine government; but the most exalted orders of created beings the holy angels, who not only yield the most to cheerful obedience to the law of God, but enjoy their highest happiness and glory in the perfection of their obedience. None but himself and the devils in the whole system of the intelligent creation, refuses subjection to the great and universal law-giver.

This consideration must be extremely shocking and perplexing, when suffered to have its due weight on the mind. But when the sinner reflects farther, that he contradicts the silent language and lessons of the whole irrational and inanimate world, how confused and self-reproached must he feel! He finds that every rank of creatures around him moves in the most exact subordination to the will of God, who has established the laws of their respective natures. The fowls of the heaven; the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea, the meanest reptile of the dust, the lights of the firmament, the revolving seasons, the winds, lightnings, and thunders, tempests and earthquakes, all of them seem to applaud the divine constitution, by that undeviating conformity they maintain thereto. What a singular and deformed creature does the sinner appear to himself, in such a situation. Gracious God! cries he, in what a

most contemptible plight am I!—Is my own species the only one endued with a rational capacity to fulfil and honor the institutions of the common Lord, and father of all? and yet, my own, the only species that dishonors him who formed it. Does the prowling savage of the forest, the whooting owl of the night, does every hissing serpent, and every loathsome worm honor and praise its creator, by acting perfectly agreeable to the laws and ends of its nature! What a wretch then am I! Had these inferior creatures, but reason enough to discover the part I am acting, and language to express themselves, in what terms would they upbraid me? Nay, would they not all be immediately in arms to destroy me from God's creation.

Would not the sun refuse to shine upon me, the air to afford me breath, the water to refresh me, the bread to yield me nourishment? would not the lightnings flash to consume me, and the tempests rage to sweep me from the face of the earth? would not the earth, did it know how much I have dishonored him who supports it, would it not open to receive me into its horrid caverns, or let me sink into the dark and deep abyss. Wherefore, O my God, convinced of the unequalled and inexcusable dishonor I have done to thee, I abhor myself, and repent, &c.

3d. In order to a due repentance, it appears necessary to take in the views and exercises of the mind, with respect to the ingratitude of sin. Ingratitude is one of the strongest proofs of degeneracy—and amongst men, it is generally branded with the most contemptible and odious names. Scarcely any one is thought less deserving of acts of kindness and favor, than one who has behaved himself ungratefully to his benefactor.

And if to the characters we have already mentioned of sin, we should add that of ingratitude, how monstrous does it appear! The relation we bear to God, as his creatures and absolute dependants, the privileges and immunities we hold by the rank of creation in which he has placed us—the bounty with which he has filled every part of the visible world, for our present use and comfort—and especially, the provision he has made in the constitution of the gospel, for our future and immortal happiness, are considerations one would think, sufficiently powerful to bind us in dutiful affection and obedience to our benefactor, all the days of our life. If we were in any sense entitled to these enjoyments, or could put in a just claim to the least of all his mercies, there would be a mitigation of our ingratitude. But, when we are not only not entitled to a single one, but might be left naked as we came into the world, or made miserable as we are capable of bearing; it is diffi-

cult to say which is most astonishing, the beneficence of God, or the ingratitude of man.

Yet, after all this, man is alone ungrateful of the creatures of God, in this visible world. Every thing that we see around us appears in some sort, to acknowledge the being of the great Creator, and returns some tribute to the Father of good. Man alone refuses to acknowledge him. Instead of expressing the grateful sensations of his heart, by a constant readi ess to serve and please his benefactor, almost every thing he does is a contradiction to his duty. Is he not a subject of the best and most gentle government, he arms himself in rebellion to overturn it, though framed to promote his security and happiness,—Is he a servant to the best of masters? he will not exercise those very commands which are given for his own good. Is he a child of the tenderest and most indulgent parent? he will not listen to admonition—he will not yield to parental authority—he will not be moved by love—nor deterred by threatening, nor reclaimed by correction. His sin is a counteraction of whatever authority, love and kindness has done for him. A person under conviction of such depravity, cannot but exclaim, O my base, ungrateful heart! Am I so blind as not to discern an unlimited pr fusion of bounty around me? Is not every thing accommodated to my use--Does not the air, the earth, the sea abound with blessings for me? Are not birds,

beasts and fishes subjected in a measure to my dominion, and made for my necessities. Does not the sun shine, the stars twinkle, the winds blow, the seasons revolve, the showers descend, the rivers flow, and the earth teem with innumerable flowers and fruits, for my pleasure and support?

Is not my life supported amidst a thousand infirmities, and prolonged amidst a thousand dangers, by the beneficence and care of my God? If this were all, it were enough to bind me for ever to him in obedience and love---but, when to these innumerable blessings, he has added the gift of his son to die for me, his holy word and spirit to instruct and comfort me; when wisdom, power and love have, as it were, made their last effort to secure to me an immortal duration of happiness. That I should sin, after all this, is surely an argument that I am lost to every generous principle, and every sentiment of duty, and my heart becomes harder and more impenetrable than the adamant. Wherefore, O my God, my most indulgent and unwearied, but most abused benefactor, "I abhor myself," &c.

Without sentiments something similar to these, I cannot apprehend there can be such a repentance as God requires, or as is necessary, in order to prepare it for farther humiliation.

4th. We now add another consideration, viz. that a powerful apprehension of the danger of sin,

will be one motive in exciting repentance. The desire of happiness, and the dread of misery, are feelings so inwrought in the very constitution of human nature, that it is perhaps almost impossible for mankind, in the present state, to act in any case, without being in some measure, influenced by them. And perhaps we may safely add, that these feelings are the most powerful of any we are capable of in this world. It is plain that our present condition is attended with innumerable troubles in every stage of it—for "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards." He tastes the bitterness of sin, as soon as he comes into existence, and lives exposed to a thousand dangers which it has planted around him. But, the pains and distresses of this life, are no ways comparable to those he is exposed to in the life to come.

"God is not only angry with the wicked every day," because of their offences; but determined to inflict on them a punishment hereafter, proportioned to the number and aggravation of their offences. And this punishment is such, as neither to admit of mitigation nor end. The very same blackness of darkness, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, that was prepared of old, for the devil and his angels, is appointed to be the portion of those who forget God. When solid reason has stripped sin of its flattering disguise, and taken a fair and impartial view of its conse-

quences, in what an horrid and alarming light does it appear! Merciful God! cries the terrified and almost distracted offender, what have I done! Is it not enough, that sin has created a world of miseries, to heap on me as soon as born—that it has mingled the ingredients of death with the whole mass of my blood, and subjected me to a thousand infirmities and sorrows through a frail and tumultuous life. Is it not enough that it has armed all the elements, and the whole creation of God against me? these alone are miseries greater than I can well bear.

But, are these only a part, and the smallest part of what I am liable to feel? Am I also exposed to the dread, justice and power of Almighty God, every hour that I live? and after this life is ended, to the most excruciating and unmitigated torments!—What most unaccountable infatuation has possessed me, so often, and so eagerly to venture on that which leads to a misery that would make my very existence my curse! Wherefore, O my God, for such unspeakable inconsistency, stupidity and madness, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. It is however, very possible, that a person may be most deeply affected with sorrow, for his sins which have exposed him to such misery, and wish a thousand times he had never committed them, and yet have no just repentance. Esau bitterly repented that he sold his

birth-right, and Judas that he betrayed his master: and yet it does not appear, that the repentance of either of them was accepted—Every criminal, no doubt, is sorry enough when he is confined in a dungeon, or carried to the place of execution, that he has brought himself to confinement, ignominy and death.

The apprehension of danger from sin may indeed make such powerful impressions on the mind, as by exciting the most serious reflexion, to prepare the way for taking in the other considerations, and so turning out genuine and productive of the most salutary effects. But, where a person goes no farther than to be affected with the dread of punishment, though he may be timorous of offending, yet he is by no means likely to exercise that self-abhorrence, which is necessary to produce true humility before the offended law-giver and judge, without which repentance will be but as the early cloud, and the morning dew.

Having thus considered some of the more immediate incitements to repentance, we proceed to mention some of its immediate effects, as necessary more fully to explain the nature of it.

1st. Where repentance is genuine, it will immediately fix in the heart such a disgust against and hatred of sin, as to determine the subject to shun it for the future, with all possible care and diligence. It is a settled principle in our nature, to

keep at a distance from objects, in proportion as they are disagreeable and offensive to our taste; and especially when we apprehend them to be dangerous to our happiness. If sin has once appeared to the mind, in the light in which it has been represented, so offensive to God, and so injurious to ourselves, a person can no more be reconciled to it, or venture on deliberate acts of it, or put himself in the way of being again entangled by it, than he will put himself in the way of a sworn enemy, whom he knows determined to take his life, the first opportunity that offers. It is true, he may be entangled at an unguarded hour, and receive some deep wounds from it—but then, the settled and habitual aversion of his soul is against it, and his constant and hearty prayer to his great protector and deliverer is, lead me not into temptation, order my footsteps by thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.

Thus will he watch and pray, that he may not fall into temptation and a snare, and be overcome by that which has cost him so many painful and distressing hours. There is a remarkable passage of the Apostle, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, immediately to this purpose—"For behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire,

yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge," &c. Then will the true penitent be affected on the recollection of his past guilt and danger, and urged to the utmost caution in every part of his conduct, lest a like evil befal him.

2nd. Another immediate effect of true repentance, is a determination not only to avoid this or that particular sin, and to observe this or that particular precept of God's word; but as far as possible, to yield an universal obedience. This likewise seems very naturally, and indeed, necessarily to flow from the feelings of the heart, when duly exercised with contrition for sin. When a child after grossly offending an indulgent parent, comes to see his conduct in a just light, he determines not only to guard against the like for the future, but, to the utmost of his ability, to comply with every parental injunction. Our most punctilious obedience, were it even perfect, would make no amends for past offences—yet, the least that ought to be done, is to serve the offended party with cheerfulness, alacrity and delight.

II. We come now to consider the duty and necessity of repentance.

1st. As to the obligation we are under to repent of our sins, it is very evident, even from the light of nature. Indeed, for the same reason that we are bound to keep any law at all, we are bound to acknowledge with sorrow, our of-

fences against it. If there be baseness, ingratitude, and rebellion in sin, we are indispensably obliged to confess the heinousness of our fault, with a suitable remorse and abasement of temper, thereby to give our testimony in favor of the law, and the law-giver. Otherwise, we give no evidence of our disapproving the part we have acted, in violating and dishonoring the government under which we live. If the law be just and good, we are bound to obey it—and if we fail of obedience, we are bound to acknowledge and be affected with our fault. If to what the light of reason suggests, we add the express injuunctions of the word of God, the duty of repentance will appear unquestionable. It was one great doctrine very often and urgently inculcated on the rebellious children of Israel, by the Prophets of old—when John the baptist came, the first doctrine he proclaimed, was that of repentance. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."--Matth. iii, 2. When our Lord came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, he urged the same thing—"Repent ye, and believe the gospel."—Mark i, 15. The same did his disciples whom he commissioned to preach to the world. "They went out and preached that men should repent"--Mark vi, 12. The same did the Apostles—"repent ye, and be converted,"—Acts iii, 19. And Paul declares to the Athenians, "the times of this igno-

rance, God winked at, but now commands all men, every where to repent," Acts xvii, 30.

So that the duty is not only enjoined expressly, but universally. Wherefore, let us proceed to consider how far repentance appears to be a matter of necessity. By its being necessary, I mean in order to the favor of God here, and eternal happiness hereafter.

1st. I would have you recollect here, what has been observed already, that repentance makes no atonement for a crime committed either against human or divine laws. So that we are by no means to consider it as necessary, by way of satisfaction to the violated laws of God, in order to make up the matter; and as it were, balance accounts with Heaven. It is no discharge of the debt we have contracted, to justice; nor does it remove the guilt of a single sin---nay, the most sincere repentance through the longest life, accompanied even with tears of blood, would not be a discharge from the debt of one transgression. I am ready to suspect that many imagine themselves acquitted of their sins, if they do but repent a little on account of them; and that their offended judge is under some sort of obligation to pardon them, on this footing.

But, this is certainly a capital mistake—pardon is obtained solely through the merits of the satisfaction of Christ. Repentance is not at all ne-

cessary in this view. But then it is indispensably necessary, in order to qualify us for receiving a pardon, consistently with the honor of divine justice. It would be a prostitution of mercy, and a dishonor to justice, to forgive an obstinate and incorrigible offender—Such indulgence would only serve to encourage him in disobedience. Yet, if he discovers a disposition to acknowledge and relinquish his crimes, there is so far reason to expect he will become a good subject. And in this view it is, that pardon is offered.

'Till the sinner is affected with the dishonor he has done to the laws and government of God, and determines to become an obedient and faithful subject, there can be no propriety in conferring on him a pardon which he has not applied for, and which he does not think himself in need of. In truth, pardon cannot by any means be granted till the offender is in a proper disposition to receive it, with all due acknowledgments of that mercy from which it comes. If he be still determined in a course of disobedience, if his heart be still untouched with remorse, of what use can such an act of mercy be to him---but only to give him greater latitude in his impiety and rebellion.

However, God will not, and cannot do that which would be a reflection on his authority and laws. Besides, without repentance, the sinner would be wholly incapable of mingling in fellow-

ship, and service with the holy subjects of the kingdom of God. Still undutiful and unreclaimed, with a disposition so opposite to theirs, they would shun him as a vile detestable rebel, who had not submitted himself to their high and holy king. Further, without repentance, the heart does not yield consent to the death and satisfaction of Christ; for how can any one acknowledge the great mercy and importance of that act which he is not sensible is absolutely necessary for him. And certainly, till this is done, the sinner lies exposed to the full curse of God's violated law.

SERMON IX.

[Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. Thomas H. Price.]

Luke iv, 18, 19.

"*The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for that to which he hath annointed me; he hath sent me to preach good tidings to the poor; to heal the broken hearted; to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and the recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are bruised; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*"

IT must always give peculiar pleasure to every serious and attentive reader of the gospel, to observe, that every circumstance in the life of Jesus Christ, appears to have been directed by the spirit of unerring wisdom, and to have contributed, in one view or another, both to illustrate his character, as the promised saviour of the world, and effect the end of his mission.

Having finished the forty days of temptation which had been appointed him, to prepare him for the difficulties of his ministry, he returned to

Galilee and performed his office with great applause. Coming at length to Nazareth, the place of his education, and entering on the Sabbath into the Synagogue; after the portion of the law appointed for the day had been read, he stood up, indicating his intention to take a part in the service. On this, the ruler of the Synagogue, presented him with the scroll containing the prophecy of Isaiah. This, it is thought was intended as a trial of his skill in the ancient prophets; among whom Isaiah is considered as one of the most difficult, speaking more of the character, offices, and kingdom of the Messiah, than any other. Our Lord, however, if this was the ruler's design, turned his envy to his own confusion, by selecting a passage, of all others the most proper and pertinent to his purpose, the intimating that he was the deliverer promised to the nation.

Whether the words were primarily a prediction of the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon, and so are accommodated by our Lord to the spiritual benefits he was to confer upon the world; or whether they were immediately spoken of himself, is doubted by good commentators. But which ever was their original design, cannot I think be a matter of great moment to determine; as the accommodation of passages in the prophets to a sense something different from their original purpose, but similar to it, is frequent in the New Testa-

ment. The words are strongly expressive of the misery of mankind, under the tyranny of sin and Satan, and the commission which Christ bore to work out their deliverance. For this he was completely qualified; having received the Holy Spirit in a more abundant measure than had ever been bestowed on any of the children of men. Whether his office were to teach, to rule or to suffer, there was a virtue and efficacy in it, to effect, for all who should receive him as the long-promised deliverer who was to come to Zion, blessings infinitely more valuable, than any of a temporal nature that had ever been enjoyed by the Jewish nation, when its prosperity was at the highest.

For a long time, previous to the coming of our Lord, that people had been in circumstances very highly calamitous and afflictive; but nothing was so galling and intolerable to them, as their oppression under the tyranny of the Romans. This evil in particular made them earnestly long for the Messiah, whom the great body of them had always regarded, in the character of a temporal prince, who was to deliver them from all their dishonors and oppressions, and place them in the highest state of worldly prosperity and glory.—Nothing therefore could possibly have been better accommodated to their condition, in all respects, than the passage which Christ chose on this occasion: and the high consolations it contained, in

the mistaken sense in which they applied it, joined probably, with a peculiar dignity, gracefulness, and tenderness, in his manner, occasioned the admiration and delight, which they expressed on first hearing him. Happy had it been for them, had they rightly understood him, and faithfully applied his most gracious words to their true design! But influenced by carnal motives only, they at the same time, mistook the meaning of his words, and lost the benefits they might have derived from them.

As it is the design of the Gospel-ministry to pursue the great objects for which Christ came into the world; and, as I hope you, my brethren of this church, will see a particular propriety in my selecting the above passage for the solemnity of this day, I propose,

1st. To consider the particular circumstances of affliction presented by the text, and their application.

2nd. The particular import of the acceptable year of the Lord.

I am

1st. To consider the particular circumstances of affliction presented by the text, and their application.

Human misery appears in so many different forms, that it is difficult to say which of them is the most formidable and affecting. But, whatever

they may be, there are few more distressing than that of men in a state of subjection to the will of conquerors; especially if it be considered, according to the allusion of the text, that the usual manner of treating prisoners in the east, was the most ignominious and cruel, that can be thought of.

By the poor is primarily intended persons in the above circumstances, having nothing that they could call their own; and were therefore entirely at the will of their victors, whether they had even what was necessary to the support of life. The word will also include every sort of extraordinary affliction under which mankind suffer. But if it be taken in its literal sense, for people in general, in narrow and indigent circumstances, it will still admit of a very important application. As these are the circumstances of a large proportion of mankind, it is a peculiar commendation of the gospel, that, with the tenderest condescension, it seems to pay particular attention to persons in such a situation. So, our Lord mentions it to the disciples of John, probably in reference to this very passage of the prophet, as one evidence of his being the Messiah, that good tidings were preached to the poor. To such the gospel offers the best of consolations; not indeed, by promising them the good things of this world—but, by enriching them with the more substantial, and permanent blessings of his grace here, and cheering them

with the assurance of an incorruptible inheritance hereafter. While, at the same time, it most effectually opens the hearts of the opulent to feel for them, and assist them. To the poor, therefore, the gospel ought to be peculiarly welcome; since it alone offers a complete redress of their grievances; though they are to look for it, only in another world. Our Lord declares himself sent also to heal the broken-hearted, that is, in this connexion, those whose spirits were quite depressed, and worn out, with the continual hardships and ill usage they endured in their captivity. If we suppose too, which I think we must, that they were, at the same time, sensible that their sufferings were the just punishment of their sins, such a reflection must have been the bitterest ingredient in their misery. But, while it makes it the deepest, and of all others, the most painful wound in the heart, it is that alone which gives a just hope of healing, and prepares the sinner to welcome the offered deliverance.

For the mere sorrows of the world, in which religion has no part, the gospel provides no relief, but leaves them to take their course, which often terminates in death. While that sorrow which is of a godly sort, worketh salvation, by receiving those consolations which divine mercy has provided. Jesus Christ, by taking away the guilt of sin, effectually heals the broken heart of the repentant

sinner, and by binding up his wounds, turneth his sorrow into joy.

He has sent me. says the messenger of peace, to proclaim deliverance to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are bruised.

The allusion is still kept up, to the miserable state of captives, whose victors considered themselves not only entitled to the right of their service, but of their lives. The deliverance then, proclaimed to them included both the regaining of the right of life and of returning to their own country, to repossess the inheritance which God had given them. But in order to this, it was necessary that the chains of their bondage should first be taken off. It is therefore next said, that their sight should be restored to them, that is, that they who were confined in dark and dismal prisons, where their eyes were of no more use to them, than if they had been entirely put out, should be released from their confinement, which would in effect be to them as the restoring of sight to those who had lost it.

This seems also to be the meaning of the next words, to set at liberty those who are bruised. They are probably a phrase then in common use, to signify release from imprisonment, in which it was usual to load the prisoner with heavy chains, both to prevent his escape, and to add to his afflic-

tion. It still heightens the misery of their condition if it be considered, that, with their eyes put out and loaded with fetters, they were sometimes obliged to work to the utmost of their strength. Thus Sampson in this situation was compelled to grind corn for the Philistines in the prison house at Gaza. All this was extremely degrading and mortifying to a spirit that was not quite deprived of its sensibility. But wretched as such a situation must be, it can but faintly represent the misery of mankind, under the merciless tyranny of Satan, their implacable enemy. Intent on their destruction, he first blinds their minds, that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may not shine unto them. In this state, they see nothing aright, that is essential to their first duties and their highest happiness. Deceived by prejudice and passion, by interest and pleasure, they think there is enough in the world to make them happy, at least, for the present, and to reward all the labor and care they bestow upon it: while there appears nothing so important in the favor of God, nothing so pleasant and advantagous in his service, nor any thing so interesting in the messages of the gospel as to secure any of their serious and habitual regard.

By this it is not to be supposed that men of this character, who enjoy the clear light of the gospel, have no just and affecting views of it. They certainly have; which is very apparent

from the fears and apprehensions it excites within them, the pleasant hopes with which it sometimes entertains them, and the labours to which it puts them of occasionally exercising some form of godliness, to quiet the one and encourage the other. They have a general theory sufficiently good; but their bias in favor of the world, strengthened by the delusions of Satan, who is well contented they should go so far, perverts the heart, where alone divine truth is effectually perceived, and so prevails over the sober and equitable decisions of conscience. Thus in the midst of light, they are in effect in darkness, and this is the darkness of the shadow of death.

In this state their greatest misery is, that they do not sufficiently see the dishonor and danger they are in; that they have lost the chief glory and happiness of the rational nature; the power of perceiving and relishing divine truth; and are in hazard of finally falling into ruin. And yet, it very frequently happens, that, in proportion to their blindness, they are apt to imagine that their sight is clear and accurate: and when the light which is within them, is darkness, how great is that darkness!

This state of blindness is the state of bondage, in which the fetters of sin are fastened on the soul, and it is prepared to go in the drudgery of Satan, and to be led captive by him, at his own

will. It is not, indeed, at once, but generally by gradual advances that men reach that state of stupefaction in which they make no exertions to get free. There are few perhaps of those who are finally inslaved, who do not often feel that inward anguish and remorse, and those fears and perturbations which rouse them to serious resolutions, and put them on some course of means to obtain deliverance. But their resolutions being hastily made, and finding the expedients they have adopted to be too painful and expensive to the flesh, they gradually decline from both, till at last they consent to wear their chains forever, rather than struggle any longer.

Do not mistake me, my brethren, as if what I have now said, intends those only, who are devoted to the grosser appetites of sense, and have thrown off those restraints which arise from the common dictates of reason, and natural religion. By no means: I include all men who have not submitted to the laws of the gospel, for, the principles of corruption are essentially the same in all; and though different constitutions may be ruled by different passions, there is in every man by nature, a propensity to sin, a dislike to pure religion, and a love of this world, strong enough to operate his ruin, if not prevented by the grace of God. And this may be the case with those of the calmer, as well as the more turbulent passions;

with the man of taste and science, the fair professor, and the blameless moralist, as men commonly speak of morality, as well as the unrestrained transgressor, all men are become unprofitable; there is none that doth good, no not one. Each one has his master passion, which maintains its authority in the heart, and brings all the others under tribute: and the world, in one view or another, has the mastery of the whole, shutting out the light of divine wisdom, and keeping the heart fast bound in the servitude of sin. And, let the malady appear with what symptoms it may, it is still mortal in its nature, a sickness unto death, if not cured by Jesus Christ, who alone can heal our diseases, and redeem our life from destruction.

It is then, natural to ask, in a case so universal and dangerous, is there no remedy provided; no power that can controul the tyranny of the enemy, and liberate those whom he hath led into bonds and imprisonment, and detains in darkness and vassalage? Cannot the strength of reason, or the refinements of education, or the precepts of philosophy, strike off their chains, and rescue them into liberty? No; their combined force is not sufficient to produce so great an effect. They have had time enough to try all the virtue they possess; but they have never yet, turned one soul from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Nor will they ever do it. If they

have controuled the grosser passions, they have as often fostered pride, and self-confidence, and ambition, as inconsistent as the others with the laws of the gospel, and as disqualifying for the happiness of heaven.

Many of the best instructed of the heathen, saw and lamented the disorder of the world; but they neither knew the extent of the evil, nor the means of correcting it. It was reserved for Jesus Christ, who had received the spirit without measure, and was invested with all power, both in heaven and on earth, to effect that great deliverance which the world so much needed, and to which no other means had been found adequate. And this leads me

Secondly: To consider the particular import of the acceptable year of the Lord.

The words evidently allude to the year of Jubilee among the Jews, which was the fiftieth in course; and because of the many benefits that attended it, was called the acceptable or welcome year. It commenced on the evening of the day of Pentecost, and was ushered in with the sound of trumpets throughout the land.

There were three particular advantages which attended it: all debts were then remitted; all slaves and prisoners were set free; and inheritances were restored to their original owners, or the families to which they belonged.

The dispensation of grace by Jesus Christ, is to all to whom it is proclaimed, if properly improved, the acceptable year of the Lord, in a sense infinitely more important than the year of Jubilee to the Jews, many as were its advantages: this afforded only temporal blessings; the christian Jubilee brings those which are spiritual and eternal.

First: Christ came into the world to discharge the debts in which sin had bound men to the justice of God.

Every transgression brings the transgressor under an heavy penalty, even the forfeiture of his soul; for the law is, the soul that sinneth shall die; and if this be the penalty of a single sin, how heavy must be the debt which every man contracts through the course of a life of transgression? Especially when the sins of the heart, which may be committed by secret inclination and passion, by motives and intentions that are never carried into act, are added to those of the conversation and conduct. The heart, indeed, is the great source of sin, and our Lord plainly declared, that concupiscence and covetousness, and anger, causeless or excessive, subjected those who were guilty of them to the utmost penalty of the law. On this principle, to what an enormous amount may the sins of men rise, under the fairest character before the world? Ingratitude, unbelief, vanity and

pride, avarice, ambition and envy, and neglect of the secret exercises of piety, though unnoticed by the world, and compatible with the most decent external demeanor, are yet high offences in the eye of God, and will come equally into judgment with those of the most disreputable character, in the estimation of men. Indeed, every man owes ten thousand talents to divine justice; and not having a mite to pay, must either go to prison and there remain, without hope of release, or be discharged from his debts by an act of grace. This inestimable benefit has been promised by Jesus Christ, who assumed our debts, and bore the punishment of our sins in his own body on the tree. As the proxy of sinners, in their stead he made atonement for their sins, of sufficient merit to cancel the most aggravated guilt, nailing to the cross the hand-writing that was against them. Though their sins were as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they were red like crimson, they shall be as wool. So that, to every penitent transgressor, Jesus Christ speaks that gracious language which conveys life, and health, and peace to the heart, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

Another most acceptable benefit of the year of Jubilee was, that

Secondly: It proclaimed liberty to all slaves and prisoners throughout the land.

The Jubilee of the gospel announces freedom to the captives and slaves of Satan and the world.

All men have surrendered their liberty to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. And in this servitude, the noblest powers of the soul are so enfeebled and benumbed, as to be incapable of those activities of holy contemplation and desire, of thanksgiving and prayer, and those aspirations after the supreme good, in which its true liberty consisteth. The pleasures of sense, and the mere cares of the world, confine it within the narrow range of creation, and chain it down to material things. This is neither agreeable to the design of God, nor to the capacities of the intelligent, immortal mind. But sensual appetite first deprived man of his freedom; and ever since, the same cause, by the same seducer, keeps him so enslaved, that he cannot do the things which he would; which reason, conscience and the gospel, teach him he ought to do. He knows himself wrong, he feels himself unhappy, and he often groans within himself, under the burden of his sins, and the fears of punishment.

Jesus Christ came to counteract the malice of Satan, to break his power, abolish his tyranny, and rescue to their native freedom, those who aspire after it. His power to effect this was visibly displayed, in curing those maladies both of body and

mind, which the enemy had been permitted to inflict on many; and driving him reluctant from his possession of the human frame, into his own abyss. The same power was manifest in silencing his oracles, and breaking those inchantments by which many were seduced from the worship of the true God, into the diabolical impieties of idolatry.

When the true light of the gospel shines into the heart, it becomes the life of men; giving new exertions to the soul, in the new views it presents, the new desires it excites, and the holy purposes and resolutions it inspires. This breaks the charm, and the chains of sin, by convincing the sinner of his folly, degradedness and misery, in the service of a master, who rewards him only with disappointment, remorse and dread, in this life; and then gives him up to the anguish of self-reproach forever. Delivered from this bondage, men feel themselves in a new creation, in which every thing wears a new aspect, and exhilarates them with new sensations of delight. And whereas, they formerly yielded their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, they now yield them as instruments of righteousness to God. And not being under the law, as that by which they are to be judged, but under grace, sin shall not have dominion over them. It will still harass and vex them, with doubts and fears, and put them to con-

tinual trouble; but, it shall not rule and sway them.

In this rescue from the yoke of Satan, and the world, his great instrument of seduction, the soul begins to live, and to breath the pure air of freedom, the freedom of the sons of God. This gives them a new character, and invests them with new privileges, which extend not only to the most valuable blessings of this life, but to all those of the life to come, that shall be necessary to make them completely happy.

The last benefit of the year of Jubilee to be now mentioned is,

Thirdly: That all inheritances that had been alienated, were restored to their original owners or to their families.

By the falshood of Satan, man lost his birthright, and was turned into the world naked and destitute, without any claim to happiness. The sentence of death pronounced upon him declared his forfeiture of immortality; and his expulsion from paradise his forfeiture of heaven. But mercy interposed to assure him, that God still regarded him with paternal affection, and would not leave him a prey to that misery he had justly incurred. By the promise of Jesus Christ his hope was sustained of regaining the favor he had lost, and of being restored to the family of God, and the forfeited inheritance.

Through the various periods of the ancient church, the spiritual benefits of the faithful were chiefly represented by those temporal advantages, on which men usually set the highest estimation; as health, peace, dignities and wealth. But, since life and immortality are clearly brought to light, they are assured of blessings infinitely superior to any thing that the world can give them, in the highest state of prosperity. In this life, indeed, they must take their lot in common with the rest of mankind; or, if they are to look for any difference in their outward circumstances, they have no assurance that it shall be in present advantages, but rather the contrary: for the way to the kingdom of God is through many tribulations, and these very commonly arise from the embarrassments and vexations of outward difficulties. These however, so far as they are occasioned by a conscientious regard to duty, shall, even here, be abundantly recompensed with inward consolations. These are the earnests of the future inheritance, whose high characters are, that it is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens. Being reserved, it is secure to the inheritors, when they shall have arrived at maturity of age; and being in the heavens, that state of incorruption, it cannot fade, being beyond the reach of those accidents which render the best goods of this world, too precarious to deserve our

confidence. The moth cannot fret it, nor the rust corrupt it, nor the fire consume it, nor can the hand of violence wrest it from the possessors. It is undefiled by fraud, or avarice, and so comes in the most honorable manner, being fairly gained by Jesus Christ, who paid down for it the price of his own blood.

In a word, it is an inheritance of complete sanctity, peace and joy, in the presence of God, and the society of those holy spirits who have kept their first estate, and are united in all the endearing offices of friendship, and the indissoluble ties of love. And, to enhance its value in our esteem, it is not an inheritance of birth-right, but the benefit of adoption; being made over to those who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

This my brethren, is an imperfect view of those inestimable blessings which are freely offered to us by Jesus Christ, the great messenger of peace. And may I not say to you, with particular propriety, this day, the gracious words of the text are fulfilled in your hearing? The solemnity in which we are engaged, of setting apart to your particular service, a minister of Christ, to carry on among you, the same work of redemption, to accomplish which, he taught and suffered, lived and died, you will no doubt, consider as in some sort, to you, the

commencement of a Jubilee of grace, the acceptable year of the Lord. Nor can you view it otherwise, if you rightly estimate the benefits with which it presents you. For it announces to you every thing you can justly esteem great and important, both for your happiness in this world, and in that to come. And self-love if duly regulated, will teach you, to neglect no means of being happy, that promise to render you so; and especially, that offers you an happiness adequate to the utmost extent of your wishes and desires. This the gospel certainly does. For that in which Jesus Christ hath so much interested himself, and continues to be interested in, cannot be otherwise than of indispensible necessity to your good, and equal to all your wants. Are you poor, then, and straitened in your worldly circumstances, so that you find it difficult to provide a competency to support you, and give to others the just claims they have upon you? The gospel proclaims to you, not only enough, but unperishable riches. And certainly, you will not prefer the pains of poverty to the ease and comforts of affluence.—Would you not rather be servants in your fathers house, where there is enough and to spare, than, like the prodigal son, naked and hungry among strangers, who would not so much as ask him to share with the swine he fed, in their coarse repast? The gospel enriches you with the best of consolations now,

and will hereafter endue you with an affluence of immortal blessings.

Are you sensible that you are blind, and see nothing of divine truth, as you ought to see it? The gospel offers you the clear sight of the soul; a light that will not mislead you. For, if you follow Christ, who is the light of the world, you shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Is not light pleasant to the eye; and is it not a delightful thing to see the sun! Will you not therefore come into the clear light of Christ, which will make you see all things plainly, rather than remain in the darkness of the shadow of death?

Let me ask you also, if freedom is not better than bondage; and if you had rather be in the service of Christ, which is liberty, than in the service of sin, which is equally degrading and enslaving? Would you not rather serve your benefactor and friend, whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light, than your irreconcilable enemy, who first aims to make you wretched, and then will scorn you for your folly? Spurn, therefore, so ignoble a service, as that of sin, and come into the liberty of the sons of God. This will give you a vigour and activity worthy of the immortal spirit that animates you; and be a source of pleasure that will alleviate all your sorrows, and give poignancy to all your enjoyments. In this state you will feel yourselves to be men, and possess a conscious dignity,

superior to all the greatness of the world. If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed. The honors of his family will place you above the kings of the earth, and neither accident nor time, nor eternity, shall deprive you of them; for none shall be able to pluck you out of his hand.

Are you contrite, and broken-hearted for your sins, and feeling burdened by them, do you groan under them as your greatest misery? Be of good cheer, for your sins are forgiven you, and you may go in peace. God, who healeth the broken-hearted, and bindeth up their wounds, will cause the bones which he hath broken to rejoice, and pour into your souls the balm of consolation.

In a word, how inveterate soever your maladies, Christ can heal them; and how pressing soever your wants, he can supply them: he is able to save even to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

My brethren, it is the great business of the gospel-ministry, to publish the good news of salvation. And, as the dispensation of this grace has, once more, become stated among you, and some of its happy fruits already apparent, I hope you are rejoicing in the same, as the tokens of a plenteous harvest.

May the year of grace that hath commenced so favorably among you, revolve with increased

blessings! May many that are now blind, be enlightened by the sun of righteousness, that they may see and live! May many that are now the servants of sin and Satan, be rescued into the liberty of the sons of God, and become the servants of Christ! And many souls that are now as bruised and enfeebled, in the mean drudgery of the world, become active, and vigorous in the holy and enlivening duties of the Christian life! And when they shall have performed their allotted services upon earth, they shall go to be forever with Christ, to rest from their labours, in the regions of everlasting light, liberty, and joy.

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presense of his glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever! AMEN.

PROMISCUOUS REMARKS

ON THE

"AGE OF REASON."

NUMBER I.

"No doubt but ye are the men, and wisdom will die with you."
JOB XII, 2

THERE are few cases in which a man exposes himself more, than by over-rating his own talents and consequence, and undertaking to discuss subjects for which he is possessed of no competent qualifications. Of this error, for which a man seldom meets with any indulgence, I do not recollect a more glaring and pitiable instance, than that of the author of the work before us. While he confined himself to politics, he was justly entitled to attention, and acquired reputation. But, by attempting the subject of religion, he has shown himself imposed on, by a vain opinion of his abili-

ties ; betrayed the narrowness of his information, both in language and science ; his ignorance of the spirit and evidences of christianity ; and his total want of that candour and diligence of enquiry, which the importance of the subject, be it in itself true or false, justly demands from every person to whom it is addressed.

Without the least diffidence, I venture to pronounce his book the most contemptible performance, in all respects, that ever was obtruded on the world, on the side of infidelity.

Were I writing against a professed Atheist, so far as he discovered any marks of sober reflection, conscience, modesty, candour or benevolence, I would treat him with respect. But, in the performance before us, so far as I can see, there is very little appearance of any one of these virtues.

It has been with much disgust, that I have observed him, in all his late publications, bringing himself forward, relating some memorable circumstance, as he seemed to suppose it, either of his parentage, or services to America, or education, or the popularity of his writings ; without the least connexion with his subject, or concern to the reader : from which I was led to suspect him of being a selfish and confident person ; and I am fully confirmed in the justness of this opinion, by his last work.

When he first gave out his intention to write on religion, from several things he had occasionally dropped, I conceived that the Christian world would be under no obligations to him, for his trouble. In all his writings, I do not recollect a single sentence which indicates him possessed of any religion at all, or that he had ever seriously considered the subject. What and how much, he really has, is plain enough by this work. With a confidence almost peculiar to himself, and worthy of his principles, he has set himself up, as the first guide, in the first age of reason, to sound science, honesty and piety. How happy for us, that we have so sage, so modest and so benevolent an instructor, to free us from the prejudices of a religion, which, in his opinion, never was, and never can be believed, by any man of a mature and unbiassed understanding!

Could he make good his charges, or any one of them, against Christianity, it would indeed be a very serious matter for the vast multitudes who are confidently looking for the happiness of another life, on its truth and certainty. But, I persuade myself, that no Christian will relinquish his hopes, by any thing that has been, or can be said against it, by a writer who has neither examined the subject, nor is capable of doing it, under the force of that vanity and those prejudices which have disqualified him for discovering and em-

bracing the simplicity of truth. Nor do I think that any man, who has made the least serious enquiry into the subject, will be biassed by a performance made up of mere ungrounded assertions, and the most gross and palpable misrepresentations. But, as some may be influenced by a name, and others think well of a book intended to degrade Christianity, I have thought it a tribute due to truth, to the honor of the author of our hopes, and to the happiness of mankind, to make some remarks on its merits.

It would be in vain to attempt to follow him through his book, as he evidently sat down to write, without having digested his thoughts into any regular plan, or having assumed any acknowledged principles, or first truths, from which, by fair argument, to establish the conclusion he aimed at. He appears to have determined to write a book against Christianity, under the vain prepossession that whatever came from his pen would be received as sound and irrefragable argument. But I hope this vain and confident man will be greatly disappointed, at least with respect to the people of America.

Though he has had the confidence to dedicate his book to us, which I consider as an insult, I persuade myself we shall not think ourselves the fools he would make us, and all other people who receive the doctrines of Christianity.

The design of these remarks is not so much to establish the evidences and truth of the Christian system, which stands immoveable on its own basis, as to show the ignorance, want of modesty, and gross misrepresentations of this author. If, in any thing, I misrepresent him, it will not be with design.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. II.

IT is not at all surprizing that a man should write superficially, incoherently, and inconclusively, on a subject he never studied; yet, that the author of this work has done this, and much worse, I hope to make appear, in the course of these remarks.

In page 105, 106, he tells us that he formed his opinion of the Christian religion, when he was a boy, about seven or eight years of age; and that he retained the sentiments he then conceived, when he wrote his book. He must, indeed, have been a mere prodigy of understanding, to form such just and correct ideas, as stood in no need of amendment, and that too on a subject of the greatest possible consequence, at a time of life when the greatest part of mankind think justly on no subject whatever: and, what is more wonderful,

that he should have had the instinct to discover what the greatest geniuses that ever appeared, could not find out, after the longest life devoted to the most serious researches after truth, viz. that the whole of the revelation is a fictitious, absurd, and irreligious fable, invented by knaves, and believed only by fools.

Truly, the fruit of his autumn is in just proportion to the blossoms of his spring. As was his childhood, with respect to religion, so is his age. His first conceptions, being in full maturity, left no room for improvement, by after reflection; but, contrary to the universal order of creation, at once reached their apex, and there stood.

On inferior subjects, however, he was obliged to use helps; not being able to acquire the knowledge of them, "by reflecting on the state of his own mind," which he says was the way he gained most of the knowledge he is possessed of.

In pursuit of science, to which, by his account, his mind had a "natural bent," he betook himself to the study of the use of the globes, and the orrery. Having mentioned this last instrument, he subjoins in a note, for sake of those who do not know what it means, that "it is an astronomical instrument, &c. and has its name from the person who invented it;" that is, we are to suppose he was a gentleman of the name of Orrery. Whereas, every person acquainted with the history of astro-

nomy, must know that it was first made by a Mr. Rowly, an English mathematician, who named it in honor of his patron, the earl of Orrery.

From this correct and important article of information, as little to his purpose as an account of the island of Japan, he proceeds to instruct us in the system of the planets, or universe, as he says. Of these planets he tells us there are six primary ones, revolving round the sun, as their common centre of motion. He ought to have said seven. His omission of the planet Herschel, lately discovered by a gentleman of that name, is unpardonable in a man pretending to so inquisitive and scientific a turn of mind; particularly, as on his plan, it was of immediate consequence to mention it, as including in its orbit a greater extent of space than all the rest; an idea which he seems to think very important towards understanding the true theology. It is surprizing, too, he has taken no notice of the comets, which are planets traversing a vastly greater extent of space than any he has mentioned.

In speaking of the revolution of the earth, he tells us it leans 23 degrees, 30 minutes; by which I suppose he means, it makes such an angle of obliquity, with the apparent course of the sun. But, it is well known to astronomers, that the said angle is continually decreasing, at the rate of

about one minute in 120 years. At the vernal equinox, in 1772, it was found to be 23 degrees, 28 minutes. The knowledge of this variation is absolutely necessary for calculating the true time of the equinoxes, solstices, &c. In several other respects, also, it was of more consequence to notice it, than many things he has mentioned. But, as it is probable he gained this idea of the earth's leaning, by the globes and orrery he studied, he never extended his information any further.

In prosecuting his display of the planetary worlds, to instruct readers in the true word of God, he says they all move round the sun in circular orbits; or, in his neat and familiar way of illustrating the subject, in the same figure that a mill-horse makes, in going his rounds. But every man of any pretensions to astronomical knowledge, ought to know that they all move in elliptical orbits. The sun is, in fact, the common centre of them all, but is not in the centre of any one orbit, which is evident from all the calculations made of their motions.

In order to conceive of the twofold motion of the earth, its diurnal and annual, we have only to imagine, according to his illustration, a top spinning round, leaning a little to one side, in the tract of a mill-horse, and the idea is completely gained. *Risum teneatis amici?*

From this puerile account of the planetary worlds, in which there is not discovered the least elevation of thought, above that of a school boy, he proceeds to remark, that "all our knowledge of science is derived from the revolutions exhibited to the eye, which those several planets, or worlds, of which our system is composed, make in their circuit round the sun;" this is an idea he says he has never lost sight of. How he first got sight of it, I am not able to conceive. We are then to suppose, that our knowledge of metaphysics, hydraulics, statics, phonics, and arithmetic, to name no others, is derived from our observation of the planetary motions. This is very philosophical, truly: very worthy of the Age of Reason.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. III.

VERY full of the idea. that all our knowledge of science is derived from the visible motions of the planets, our author proceeds to remark, that "it is from the sciences that all the mechanical arts, which contribute so much to our earthly felicity, are derived." All the sciences depend on the knowledge of the planetary motions, and all the mechanical arts are derived from the sciences: then, by just reasoning, all those arts originate

from the planets. To them, then, and to nothing else, we are to ascribe the invention of horse-mills, so useful for explaining the circular motion of the planets, together with the arts of house and ship building, of weaving, shoe and needle making, &c. which contribute so much to our earthly felicity. But, so far is it from being true that all science sprung from the observation of the planets, that the most accurate knowledge we have of their motions, depends on the science of geometry, and that, as its name implies, was originally the art of measuring land.

To shew the extreme confusion and absurdity of his ideas of the arts and sciences, I will subjoin a sentence or two of an excellent French critic and antiquarian, the President De Goquet. "I have thought proper to place the article of the sciences immediately after that of the arts, because they owe their origin to mechanical operations, without rules or principles. It was by little and little, by a long course of experience, trials, and reflections, that mankind were enlightened, that they formed principles and systems, and brought their discoveries and their knowledge to that degree of perfection which deserves the name of science"*. So that his ideas are directly the reverse of the truth.

With all this confusion, he has, however, a very clear and deep intention, which is, "to con-

* Introductory to the history of Origin of Laws, &c.

front the internal evidence those things afford, with the Christian system of faith." What he means by the internal evidence of the planets, I do not so well understand. However, be it what it may, he applies it to confute Christianity; and it is to this good intention he applies the knowledge he at first gained, by intuition, when a boy, and all that he afterwards acquired from the globes and orrery.

To come to his favorite object, he says—"In the midst of these reflections, what are we to think of the Christian system of faith, that forms itself on the idea of only one world?"—P. 125. The Christian system of faith forms itself on no such idea, nor has it any where given us the least hint of it. It does not indeed teach us any thing of the plurality of the material worlds; but it instructs us in what the universe of matter, with all its diversity of forms and motions, could never give the least hint of—the certainty of a separate and immortal state of existence, and that there are "thrones, dominions, principalities and powers," various orders of invisible and intelligent creatures, keeping up a constant intercourse with this world, performing the most benevolent services to the true subjects of Christ, and united in one family with them, under the paternal care and direction of him, their common head. "Are they not all ministring spirits, sent forth to minister to

them who shall be heirs of salvation ?" How cold, barren, and uninteresting is his puerile conceit of the society of the planets, moving in sight of one another, for sake of teaching the sciences and mechanical arts, compared with this sublime and consolatory view given by the Gospel ! There is another beautiful and affecting sentiment delivered by Christ himself, in these words—" I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." Is this a solitary and unsocial idea ? We cannot, indeed, see those benevolent beings, nor be conscious of their services, when they perform them ; but it is a great pleasure to think that we have an interest in their friendship, that they are capable of rendering us the most important offices, and that we shall finally enjoy the most intimate society with them.

Compared with our author's labored, but perplexed and uninstructive descant on the use of the heavenly bodies, how concise and intelligible is the account given us by Moses? " And God said, let there be lights in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night ; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years." And this is the principal use that men have made of them, in every age of the world, though they have also been applied to others. In this view, which is truly philosophi-

cal, their instruction is level to all capacities, and is infinitely more important to us, than any of their lectures to one another, on the true theology.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. IV.

"IT has been, says he, by rejecting the evidence that the word, or works of God, in the creation, afford to our senses, and the action of our reason upon that evidence, that so many wild and whimsical systems of faith and of religion, have been fabricated and set up." P. 127. Whatever may be said of other systems of faith and religion, with which I have nothing to do, this sentiment, with respect to the Christian revelation and system of doctrines, is as untrue as any thing ever said; and the author is either totally ignorant of it, or wilfully misrepresents it; he may choose which he pleases. Where, I wonder, did he obtain the information on which he has grounded this heavy charge? Not, I am certain, from any thing contained in the Bible. So far from rejecting the instruction or evidence, as he says, conveyed by the works of creation, it acknowledges its importance, and carries it vastly beyond the poor confused sentiments he has taken up, with all his pretensions to

science and the true theology. While it adduces the visible works of God, as evidences of his being, wisdom, power and goodness, it every where instructs us in the doctrine of an universal providence, which this man does not seem to have learned from the lectures of the planetary worlds—a doctrine as clearly taught by the visible creation, as the being of the creator. Let us confront his assertion with an example or two.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line, (their tendency, or instruction, like a straight line) is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."—Ps. xix. Does not this improve, in the most beautiful and instructive manner, the evidence which the heavens give of the existence and wisdom of God? And where can we find, in the writings of any mere pupil of the creation, so lively and animating an account? Our author has mentioned this psalm, as an example of true deistical composition; though, not having the original by him, as he several times informs us he keeps no Bible, he gives us a paraphrase of it by Mr. Addison, which, though a pretty composition, falls far short of the spirit of the original. Very unfortunately for his cause, this paraphrase

was made by a gentleman infinitely his superior, in taste, genius, virtue and piety, who lived and died in the profession of the Christian faith. Whether it be a true deistical composition, or not, it flatly contradicts his assertion, and shews that he did not know what he said, or said contrary to what he thought. Let us next confront his assertion with the words of an apostle of the Christian system—"For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead."—Rom. i. 20. Is it possible for words to be more clear and forcible, in favor of the instruction afforded by the visible creation? He goes farther, and says that the heathen were without excuse, for either denying the existence, or perverting the ideas, of God.

I shall only mention one passage more, though a great number are to be found in the New Testament. They are the words either of the same apostle, or of Barnabas, his fellow servant, spoken at Lystra in Lycaonia. "Nevertheless, he left not himself without a witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."—Acts xiv. 17. These words, extremely beautiful, and perfectly correct, not only take in the doctrine of the divine existence, but his providence which supplies all the necessities of man, and without which

all the sciences and mechanical arts, of which our author seems very fond of talking, can contribute nothing at all to our earthly felicity. After this, what faith can we place in the assertions of a man, who talks at random, without the least respect to the most plain and obvious doctrines of Christianity?

We are now not to think strange of any thing he says, however unsupported, and are therefore not to be surprized at the following words—"It is not among the least of the mischiefs that the Christian system has done to the world, that it has abandoned the original and beautiful system of theology, like a beautiful innocent, to distress and reproach, to make room for the hag of superstition."—P. 76. Here also the author speaks either without ideas, or respect to truth. There are few pages in the Bible, unless in the book of Ruth, or in genealogical tables of the Jews, in which all the ideas that ever were, or ever can be ascertained of God, from the visible creation, are not conveyed to us, perfectly free from superstition, and in the strongest possible language. It would be useless to enumerate them. The book of Job, in particular, abounds with the most sublime descriptions of the divine power, wisdom, and goodness, dictated by the visible works of the creation.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. V.

"It is a fraud, says he, of the of the Christian system, to call the sciences human inventions; it is only the application of them that is human" P. 77, 78.

The first part of this sentence is totally groundless; the latter perfectly frivolous. There is not a single one of what we call the sciences, that is either named, or so much as hinted at, in the Christian system. There are but two places in the whole Bible, in which the word science occurs, which are, Dan. i, 4. and 1 Tim. vi, 20. In the first place, it either means learning in general, or skill in solving knotty and puzzling questions, which was a favorite amusement of the great, in those times; or interpreting dreams, which were commonly much regarded, as thought to be ominous. In the other passage, it has a different meaning; the words are—"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, that is, the genuine doctrines of Christianity, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." Here is not a word of true science, or useful knowledge, but only a caution to avoid the absurd and contradictory doctrines which had been by some heretics intro-

duced into the church, from the heathen philosophy, probably respecting fate, the plurality of gods, or fables on the origin of the world, which were at that time favorite subjects among the Grecian philosophers ; or the particular opinions of those who called themselves Gnostics, respecting the Eons, a subordinate kind of divinities adopted into their religion, from the Oriental philosophy. The Apostle himself was a man of science and literature, no doubt well acquainted with the different systems of philosophy then in vogue ; being a native of Tarsus, which was, next to Athens, the principal resort of learned men, for a great length of time.

But, supposing the Christian system did call the sciences human inventions, where would be the fraud or the harm ? As to saying, " it is only the application of them that is human," there is no sentiment of the least consequence or import in the observation. Let us call them discoveries, which has the same meaning as inventions ; is not this as much human as the application of them?

If he meant any thing at all by the observation, it must have been to convey this idea—That Christianity is unfavorable to science. If this be really his meaning, and I can make out no other; then, nothing can be more untrue. It is, indeed, no part of its immediate design, to teach men the sciences and arts ; but it is more favorable to

them, than any other system of religion whatever. It gives more encouragement to free enquiry, calls the attention more to the simplicity of truth, more effectually tends to quicken and enlarge our conceptions, by presenting to the mind the greatest and most interesting doctrines ; has had, among its advocates and professors, the greatest number of philosophers, and promoters of science ; and has, in effect, done more towards the civilization and improvement of society, than any other system of religion in the world.

If errors have made their way into the Christian church ; if, through the establishment of the Roman hierarchy, the great body of it was for several ages debarred of the means of knowledge, this was not owing to the Christian system, but to the corruptions that were introduced into it. For several centuries after the times of the Apostles, there were numerous schools for teaching the philosophy of the times, both among the Greeks and Latins, under the direction of men who had been heathen philosophers, but become Christian teachers, proselyted by the purity, simplicity, and benevolent tendency of the doctrines of Christ.

At the beginning of the reformation, Luther and Melanchton, the leaders of it, industriously encouraged and promoted literature and science ; though the former entirely renounced the philosophy of Aristotle, which had been chiefly culti-

vated in the Christian schools. Even in the dark ages, the literature that was preserved from the ravages and general destruction of the northern nations, that overturned the Roman empire, was chiefly among the Christians that lived a retired and monastic life. And it must be known to every man acquainted with the history of philosophy, that the greatest improvements in science, in modern times, have been made by men professing the Christian system of faith. If at any time science has been discouraged, or obstructed, by its professors, it has not been owing to the spirit of its doctrines, but to a perversion of them. And it would be as just to say, that reason is a bad endowment, unfavorable to science and human happiness, because it has been perverted to the detriment of both; as, that the Christian system is unfriendly to philosophy, and the enlargement of the mind, because some men, under the profession of it, have been guilty of this error.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. VI.

SINCE closing the preceding number, I have recollected some passages of the author, respecting the influence of Christianity on literature and science, which are too much to my purpose to be

passed over in silence: and, therefore, without any apology, I shall resume the subject, which I had formerly dismissed. In reading this book, we are constantly to keep in mind two intentions of the writer; the one of which is, to calumniate, as far as possible, the Christian system; the other to make his readers think him a man of extensive science and erudition. In shewing the vanity of his pretensions on this subject, we shall accomplish a material point—the exposing his incompetency to make good his hardy assertions to the disadvantage of Christianity; especially, as he seems to rest the main weight of his objections against it, on the principles of science. Whether he be a man of science, or not, is not in itself a matter of the least concern to the advocates of revelation, nor would it merit the trouble of writing a single sentence; but, it is of real consequence to them to know that the author of the most indecent and virulent attack that was ever made on it, was in no respect, qualified to effect the design he had so much at heart. In almost every thing he has said on science and literature, he has shewn himself shamefully defective and confused in his ideas, for a man of his extraordinary pretentions: he has not digested any thing he has touched on, but depended entirely on scraps picked up here and there, and applied them without the least respect to that truth and candor, which science, indepen-

dent of religion, might teach every man possessed of it: and this I proceed to make good.

"The setters up, says he, and the advocates of the Christian system of faith, could not but foresee that the continually progressive knowledge which man would gain, by the aid of science, of the power and wisdom of God manifested in the structure of the universe, and in all the works of creation, would militate against, and call in question the truth of their system of faith; and therefore it became necessary to their purpose, to cut down learning to a size less dangerous to their project, and this they effected by restricting the idea of learning to the dead study of the dead languages." P. 92. 93.

What he means by "the works of creation over and above the structure of the universe," I do not understand. But, that the "setters up and advocates of the Christian system of faith," never did, and never could foresee, what he says they could not but foresee, is sufficiently evident by this single consideration, that it never has happened. The more successfully the structure of the universe is studied, the more plain and rational appear the principles on which the Christian system is founded, and the more readily their truth is acknowledged. It has accordingly happened, that the greatest and most celebrated students of the works of creation, have been firm adherents to Christian-

ity; among whom, in modern times, it is sufficient to name Bacon, Boyle and Newton. And I believe it is, and long has been the universal practice, for students in divinity to begin their course with the principles of natural religion, as deduced from the visible structure of the universe, as a preparation for examining the grounds of Christianity. It is only by pretenders to the true science and philosophy, and superficial and prejudiced enquirers into the merits of the Christian system, that it can be rejected.

But, supposing its advocates had foreseen what he mentions, when and where did they restrict learning, or, as he says, the idea of it, to the study of the dead languages? And to what dead languages did they restrict it? The Latin was a living language, and regularly spoken even in France, till about the ninth century; and the Greek was both written and spoken in the Eastern empire, till after the taking of Constantinople by the Ottomans, in the fifteenth century. When both the Latin and Greek ceased to be living languages, they were studied by the Christians, chiefly with a view to become acquainted with the different systems of philosophy, theology, or eloquence, which were written in them, but particularly the first. We are certain that in no age or country did they ever so restrict learning. But, we may assign a pretty good reason for this hardy assertion. It is

to be remembered, that this author himself never learned the dead languages; and therefore he means, in some measure, to palliate his ignorance of them, by so frequently ringing on the sciences; as if the Christian world had never heard of them before, and he alone had studied and understood them.

In the next sentence, he says what is no less extraordinary, and what I believe no man of reading ever said before. "They not only rejected the sciences out of their schools, but persecuted them, and it is only within about the last two centuries that the study has been revived."

What he means by the sciences I do not clearly understand; because, throughout his book, he uses science and the sciences, as equivalent terms. But, if he means philosophy in general, nothing can be wider from the truth, than this assertion. From the age next to that of the Apostles, till the seventh century, there was not a Christian teacher of note, or any of those called the Fathers, who was not acquainted with the most famed systems of the Greek philosophy. They read and studied them with eagerness, that, by detecting their errors, they might the better establish and vindicate the Christian doctrines against the cavils of their heathen adversaries. Though they often reasoned very unphilosophically; yet, still by far the greater part of them thought it of great import-

ance to be acquainted with the method of reasoning, and philosophical tenets maintained by the Gentile philosophers, who wrote either before or after the date of Christianity. And their intentness to illustrate the doctrines of the gospel, on scientific principles, and reduce every thing belonging to it, to the standard of philosophy, became at length one principal cause of their departing from the simplicity of divine truth. From this error, as springing from too high an opinion of philosophy, some of them fell into the opposite, and thought it rather unfriendly than advantageous to Christianity, to pay any serious regard to it. However, there was not a school among them, of any note, for several centuries, in which the whole extent of philosophy, as far as it was then understood, was not assiduously cultivated. "They industriously enriched their writings with the moral doctrines and precepts of the ancients, as far as they would coalesce with the Christian institutes. Without addicting themselves to any sect of heathen philosophers, they selected from each whatever they judged to be consistent with the doctrine of their divine master, and capable of forwarding the great end of their office as teachers of Christianity."*

* Enfield's History of Philosophy.

Even in the dark ages, from the seventh till the fourteenth century, when learning revived, there were many in the Christian church, who struggled through all the difficulties of those times, and did as much as could be expected from men in their circumstances.

It is to the Christian schools that we are indebted for the restoration of learning and philosophy,* and from that time, for the great and rapid advances made in every kind of useful literature and science. If there have been a few instances, and they are but very few, of Christian princes, or prelates, or others, rejecting particular systems, or doctrines of philosophy, or persecuting the professors of them, it is extremely disin-

* As the Mahometans have the credit of instructing the Christians in the sciences, towards the close of the dark ages, it is but justice to the latter, to show how the former came by their knowledge. "The first circumstance which seems to have led to the introduction of science and philosophy, into the courts of the Caliphs, was the necessity which the ignorant Arabians were under, of calling in the more enlightened Christians, who resided at this time in great numbers at Bagdat, the seat of the empire, and in other parts of the Mahometan dominions, to superintend and regulate the practice of the medical art Al Mansor had two Christian physicians in his court, and who, being men of letters, inspired the prince with the love of literature and philosophy. The Caliph himself, under their direction studied astronomy—"I have made choice of Messuc, said Al Mansor to his father Rashid, not as a teacher of religion, but as an able preceptor in useful sciences and arts; and my father well knows, that the most learned men, and the most skilful artists, in his dominions, are Jews and Christians."—*History of Philosophy.*

genuous to represent this as either having been generally done, or as arising from the spirit of Christianity. As to the prosecution of Galileo by the inquisition, a court always abhorred by the body of Christians, it was not for cultivating the sciences, but for advancing the Copernican principles of the solar system; a doctrine which may either be rejected or maintained, without the least reference either to natural or revealed religion. It was a stupid and infamous proceeding. But, if fifty instances could be added to it, of the same nature, it would no more make good his unqualified assertion, than the atheism of Spinoso, would be a just medium to prove all the Jews of his age, and every other, to be atheists. Of our author's accuracy and fidelity in stating facts, relative to the subject, we shall give some farther examples in the next number.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. VII.

"LATER times have laid all the blame on the Goths and Vandals; but, however unwilling the partizans of the Christian system may be to believe or to acknowledge it, it is nevertheless true, that the age of ignorance commenced with the

Christian system. There was more knowledge in the world before that period, than for many centuries afterwards."—P. 96.

That the invasion of the Roman empire by the Goths, Vandals, and other barbarous nations, occasioned the general wreck of literature, philosophy, and the arts, which continued for so many ages, is a fact asserted, I believe, by all historians who have related that event, both of later and earlier times; and our author must produce proofs of his being much better acquainted with history, than he is with science and theology, before we can admit his bare assertion, as sufficient to invalidate such a multitude of testimonies on the other side. He must either have been entirely ignorant of that part of history, or regardless of what he said, in calumniating Christianity.

As to "the age of ignorance commencing with the Christian system," it is as true as almost any thing he has said. It is much to the honor of that system, that it was first published, and within forty years from that time, by its own strength, made its way through the whole Roman empire, in an age of more literature, science, and polished manners, than any one that the world had before seen. The probability of this, and what he says in the next sentence, that "there was more knowledge in the world before that period, than for many centuries afterwards," will appear by the

following short list of writers in the four first centuries. In the first, to name no others, are Quintilian, Pliny the elder, and Josephus. In the second, are Plutarch, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelianus Antoninus, Diogenes Lærtius, Irenæus, Lucian, Origen, Celsus. In the third, are Plotinus, Dio, Cassius, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Anatolius. In the fourth, are Julian the emperor, Claudian, Terence, Ammianus Marcellinus, Lætantius, Eusebius Pamphilus. All these authors, to which many others might be added, for their writings and criticism, in poetry, history, and philosophy, have merited a distinguished place in the records of literature; and several of whom have produced works as perfect in their kind, as any in the preceding ages of the world. Is it therefore, in the least, reasonable to suppose, that there was no addition made to the stock of knowledge by all the labors of these great men? We may, at any rate, be pretty certain that it was not diminished, as he supposes.

Before I examine another remarkable sentence of the author, on this subject, the following historical observations respecting Christianity, are very worthy of attention. "The founder of the Christian faith was early ranked, both by the enemies and the friends of Christianity, among philosophers. Lucian classes him with Pythagoras, Apollonius Tyanœus, and Alexander. Several of

the Platonic philosophers speak of him as a man animated by a divine demon, and sent from heaven for the instruction of mankind. The Jews early accused him of practising magical arts. Some of the Pagan adversaries of Christianity, even asserted that Christ was indebted, for his doctrine, to the heathen philosophers, and particularly to Plato."*

It is evident from these opinions of the author of Christianity, that it was not unfriendly to philosophical enquiries, nor checked the progress of true science. On the contrary, by the novelty, and peculiar sublimity of its doctrines, it attracted more attention, and was more carefully scrutinized, by men of philosophical talents, and curiosity, than any other system of religion ever published to the world. And it could not be otherwise than attended to, by all men of a taste for pure morality and sublimity of sentiment, who had been accustomed to the best of the heathen philosophers, though their prejudice kept the greatest part of them from embracing it. If it were in order, or agreeable to my plan, it would be extremely pleasant to go over some of the most remarkable passages of the New Testament, which equally express the most perfect morality, and the soundest philosophy; by which it would appear, that Christianity very far surpasses any thing ever be-

* History of Philosophy.

fore published, and contains more sublime philosophy, than all the volumes of the heathen philosophers put together. But, since I have left my ground, a little, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of spending a thought or two on that fine passage of St. Paul. in his manly, polite, and elegant discourse in the Areopagus at Athens. "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands: neither is he worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."—Acts xvii, 24. Without citing any thing more of this discourse, I will appeal to every man of taste for the true sublime, and of the most extensive reading, whether he ever met, in any human composition, with a train of ideas, in so short a compass, expressive of so genuine piety, and so sound philosophy? No words, I believe, of the same number, were ever so pregnant with sentiment. Can a system then, which every where abounds with such correct and noble ideas of God, be calculated to stifle reason, and confine the limits of knowledge? No. Its tendency is to enlarge the boundaries of the sublimest science, by detaching the mind from low and trifling pursuits, and invigorating all the powers of reason. It teaches not only the true author of the universe, the dependence of all things upon him, the neces

sity of attending to the evidences of his being, from his visible works, and the marks of his constant and universal agency on them; but the reasonableness and obligation of paying him the most pure and devout homage. How cold and lifeless is our author's religion, taught by the sciences, and his puerile ideas of the structure of the universe, when compared with such a passage as I have mentioned! In the next number, I shall examine him a little farther on this subject, and then pass to some others of a different nature.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. VIII.

WHAT this author says, P. 128, of "a bad action, that it begets a calamitous necessity of going on," may, with the utmost propriety, be said of himself, in this work. Having undertaken to confute, and banish from the world, the Christian system, he was under "the calamitous necessity" of renouncing all respect to the evidences which attest its truth; to the good sense and integrity of the greatest and best of men, who have embraced it; and to the clearest and best authenticated facts of history; when he conceived it would be to his purpose to deny them.

Of this we have already produced instances, and shall now proceed to produce others.

"The Christian system laid all waste;" that is, from the scope of his remarks, literature, science, and theology: "and, if we take our stand about the beginning of the 16th century, we look back through that long chasm"—that is, to the commencement of Christianity, when the age of ignorance commenced—"to the times of the ancients, as over a vast sandy desart, in which not a shrub appears, to intercept our vision to the fertile hills beyond."—P. 99.

Let us then take our stand, at the point of time he mentions, and cast our eyes over "the vast sandy desart" of the preceding ages of Christianity, towards "the fertile hills of the ancients," and try if we can discover any agreeable objects to relieve our vision, in the barren and cheerless retrospect.

In tracing the four first centuries of the Christian era, we have seen not only shrubs, but flowers and fruit trees, and well cultivated fields, to refresh us in our travel. It will therefore be needless to tread the same ground over again. We shall then mark the state of knowledge, only in a few centuries back from the stand we have occupied.

The revival of letters, I believe, is dated, by the best historians and others, at the latter end of the fourteenth century, at least an hundred years earlier than the time at which we have taken our stand. This itself would be an agreeable object

to an eye less nice and curious than that of our author, which can be entertained only with things of great and distinguished excellence.

We will first take a view of authors who appeared in the time we propose to review; and then, of useful institutions, or discoveries in the arts, &c. First, as to authors: and in this part of our design, it will be only necessary to mention a few names of particular distinction in the records of literature.

In the 15th century we meet with the respectable names of Picus Mirandula, Theodore Gaza, Laurentius Valla, a writer of great eminence, Philelphus, Politian, Hermolaus. In the latter end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th, we find Dante, Petrarch, Nicephorus, Occam, Boccace. The last and two first of these have always been reckoned omong the principal restorers of literature after the dark ages. Petrarch has the honor of having restored the purity of the Latin, of fixing the standard of the Italian, and carrying its poetry to its highest degree of perfection. Dante was an incomparable genius; the character of his Inferno is thus given by Wharton, a correct and delicate critic—"Dante wrote his sublime and original poem, which is a kind of satirical epic, and which abounds in images and sentiments, equal to the best of Homer, but whose works he had never seen, about the year 1310."

In the 13th, are Arnoldus de ville neuf, John Duns Scotus, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon—of the last of whom it is sufficient to say, that he was singly great enough for one age.

To this list I will only add Alfred the Great, king of England, in the 9th century, whose name will be venerable through all ages, for his literary and scientific character, as well as his piety and public spirit. Among these, if there are none who made any great additions to science, there are those whose genius and writings shew an eminent degree of taste, worthy of any age of the world, and sufficient to rescue those in which they lived from the reproach of entire ignorance and barbarism.

Leaving the writers of those ages, we shall now entertain ourselves a little with the useful institutions, discoveries in the arts, &c. preceding the time where we are supposed to stand.

Among the useful institutions of the 15th century, may be reckoned a great number of academies, public schools, colleges, or universities, for promoting literature and science. Of these, the most noted are those of Aberdeen, Glasgow, Friburg, Louvain, Leipsic. In the 14th century, are those of Cologne, Sens, Cracow, Prague, Vienna, Pisa, Ferrara, to name no others. To these we may add that of Oxford, in the latter end of the

9th century; that of Cambridge,* in the beginning of the 10th; that of Paris, in the latter end of the 8th; and that of Boulogne, in the beginning of the 5th—a fountain of polite literature and science.

Without any remarks of my own, I will here add some of a very elegant and well informed historian,† to point out the effects of these institutions on the state of the human mind, and society. "A regular course of studies was planned. Privileges of great value were conferred on masters and scholars. Academical titles and honors of various kinds were invented, as a recompense for both. Nor was it in the schools alone, that superiority in science led to reputation and authority; it became the object of respect in life, and advanced such as acquired it, to a rank of no inconsiderable eminence. Allured by all these advantages, an incredible number of students resorted to these new seats of learning, and crowded with eagerness into that new path which was opened to fame and distinction." "In the year 1262, there were 10,000 students in the university of Boulogne. In the year 1340, there were 30,000 in the university of Oxford. In the same century, 10,000 persons voted in a question agi-

* Had been founded about the middle of the 7th.

† Robertson's Charles V.

tated in the university of Paris; and as graduates alone were admitted to that privilege, the number of students must have been vastly great."

We will now mention a few of the useful arts, either invented, or improved, in the times preceding the 16th century.

In about the middle of the 15th, we find at Florence, the art of engraving prints, an elegant discovery; and about the same time, in Germany, that of printing, one of the most important that the world has ever seen. Near the close of the 13th, was discovered the use of spectacles, of singular utility; the art of making looking-glasses of chrystal, among the Venetians, and the invention of wind-mills. In this century also, we find clocks in Italy, and a very famous one at Bologna. In the latter end of the 12th, glass windows, an elegant and most useful discovery, were brought from France into England, though found out long before.* "Florence was at that time a second Athens."†

I will subjoin a very sensible remark of Voltaire, worth more than all our author has said about the sciences, and the arts, as springing from them; it is this—"Even those rude ages produced some useful inventions, the effect of that mechanic genius, with which nature endows men, independent of philosophy."

* Voltaire. † Idem.

Is there nothing then, in all this "vast chasm," to entertain the eye, and refresh the mind, in looking back from the beginning of the 16th century, to the commencement of the Christian era? The view we have taken is extremely pleasing, and must be highly gratifying to all minds, not possessed of so exquisite a taste as that of our author. All these improvements, too, were made by Christians. I had forgotten, till this moment, to mention the art of making paper, discovered in the 11th century, of peculiar importance, not only to science and literature, but the common concerns of life.

What then, I will ask, could this man have been about, when he ventured such assertions, so contrary to the plainest facts? I repeat it, either he must have been quite ignorant of these things, or meant, without any regard to facts, to impose on his ignorant readers, for sake of degrading Christianity. No other supposition can be made, by the most rigid charity, or the most perfect candor.

In the names, institutions, inventions, &c. I have mentioned, I am not certain that the dates are all accurate; they are such as I have found in different chronologists, and believe that they are in the main right. If any are incorrectly given, it has not been with a design to mislead; and I am very willing to be set right. A few years on the one

side, or the other, can no ways affect the design of reciting them. On the whole, I hope what this author has said with respect to the influence of Christianity on the sciences, and the improvement of the human mind, is made sufficiently to appear to be wholly founded in an entire disregard to truth; and this opinion, I can see no reason to retract. Before concluding this number I will add one thought, which appears to me of considerable moment on this subject, and that is, that one principal impediment to the progress of philosophical knowledge, arose from one of the most celebrated of the ancients, I mean Aristotle. The respect which was paid to his writings, as oracular on science, prevented both Christians and others, from exerting their own talents, and thinking for themselves. The moment men lost their implicit confidence in this great man, and began to strike out a path for themselves, science began to shew its consonancy with reason, and the dawn of true philosophy emitted its first rays upon the world.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. IX.

I HOPE my readers will excuse me, if I trouble them with a few more sentences respecting the sciences, before we leave the subject. "The event that served more than any other to break the first

link in this long chain of despotic ignorance, is that known by the name of the Reformation by Luther. From that time, though it does not appear to have made any part of the intention of Luther, or of those who are called Reformers, the sciences began to revive, and liberality, their natural associate, began to appear. This was the only public good the Reformation did; for with respect to religious good, it might as well not have taken place."—P. 99, 100. That it was an immediate and favorite part of the intention of the Reformers, to promote true science and philosophy, is a fact as little to be questioned, as almost any other in history. "Perceiving that the understanding was clouded, and the freedom of enquiry restrained, by the forms of the schools, and that nothing contributed so much to perpetuate superstition and error in the church, as false philosophy, these great and able men concluded, that the disease admitted of no palliative; that, in order to produce any great or lasting effect, it was not sufficient barely to lop off the heads of the tares which had sprung up in the church, but that it was become necessary to tear them up by the roots. They therefore, with a degree of magnanimity which entitles them to immortal honor, made a bold and open attack at once upon the corruption of philosophy and theology; laying open the numerous evils which the scholastic mode of philoso-

phising had introduced into religion; shewing by what puerile arts, and with how much injury to truth, both natural and divine, it had maintained its authority; and exhorting young men to leave such faithless guides, and give themselves up wholly to the direction of reason and revelation."*

If it was no part of their intention to promote science, how came they assiduously to teach and recommend it to their followers; and by what means did the sciences and liberality revive; Their labors and the fruits of them sufficiently indicate their intention. On any other supposition, they must have acted a most senseless and unaccountable part. As to the reformation doing no "religious good," on our author's own favorite and leading principle, that it is from science we learn the true theology, the revival of the sciences was the greatest religious good that could have happened; and in the same degree as the Reformers made their pupils good philosophers, they made them true theologians—and with this I dismiss the subject.

As a sort of preface to his observations on revelation, he makes these remarks: "It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and pro-

* History of Philosophy.

stituted the chastity of his mind, as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every crime."—P. 10. This is quite as modest and candid, as could be expected from the man; but, on the supposition that every man who professes to believe the Christian doctrines, is guilty of "mental lying," and "prepared for the commission of every crime," there is nothing too severe in the remark. "Mental lying" is, indeed, very injurious to the person who is guilty of it; but, if I am not mistaken, verbal lying is productive of much greater mischief to society; and there is something which comes very near to it, if it is not the thing itself; I mean, deliberate misrepresentation, of which this book has a very sufficient number of examples.

Speaking of revelation, he says, "it is a contradiction in terms and ideas, to call any thing a revelation that comes to us at second hand, either verbally, or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication."—P. 13. Supposing any thing supernaturally communicated to an individual, which could not have been otherwise known, and it is communicated from him to others, the thing itself is as much a matter of revelation to the millionth person who is instructed in it, as to the first. It is with respect as well to their eminent rank, as being above the power of

reason to discover, as the extraordinary circumstances attending their discovery, that certain truths are said to be revealed, and their particular character, as such, is not in the least affected, by the frequency of their communication.

When Jeremiah foretold to the Jews their captivity by the Babylonians, it was as much revealed, or uncovered to them, as it was to him. And the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, as made known to the world, in a manner over and above the reach of human reason, are to us now, and will be to the last generation of men, as truly a matter of revelation, or discovery immediately from God himself, as they were to the first man to whom they were disclosed; and this shall serve as a full answer to his remark.

"As to the account of the creation, with which the book of Genesis opens, it has all the appearance of being a tradition which the Israelites had among them before they came into Egypt." P. 36. That they might have had some tradition respecting the creation, is in itself very probable; but that they had the same account of it which is given by Moses, is in the highest degree improbable. One circumstance alone is sufficient entirely to discredit such an opinion; which is, that it was impossible a true account of it could have come by tradition. Man was the last of creatures made; and supposing Adam to have been capable of

communicating it to his posterity, he could have gained it no otherwise than by immediate revelation. In the same manner, and no other, must Moses have been instructed in so circumstantial a detail of facts prior to the existence of the human race; an account too, as strictly philosophical, as it is particular.

Not satisfied with what he has already said on the subject, he adds, "the manner in which the account opens shews it to be traditionary. It begins abruptly. It is no body that speaks. It is no body that hears. It has neither first, second, nor third person. It has every criterion of being a tradition." If three times asserting it to be a tradition, in the compass of twelve lines, will not prove it to be so, I know not what will. But, unfortunately for his purpose, the very circumstances he mentions, are the strongest marks of its authenticity, and excellence. The manner of its beginning is extremely different from the dubious and cautious style of tradition. Moses begins, and goes on, and concludes, in a manner which most clearly indicates that he saw every circumstance and event, in a view that required no hesitation or preface; and so strongly was his mind impressed with the subject, that his language and manner are raised in a just proportion to its dignity and importance. This is a circumstance which in a moment must strike every person capable of

perceiving the true sublime; and it has accordingly been noticed by one of the finest critics of antiquity, I mean Longinus. Though an heathen, he was so struck with the third verse of this history, that he gives it a place among examples of sublime ideas. But, with regard to such things, our author usually either "soars too high, or sinks too low." Besides, it is in this abrupt manner, without "first, second, or third person," that the finest historians enter upon their narration. In this manner St. John begins his gospel, and in nearly the same words, as well as spirit; and in the very same manner begin the most celebrated historians of antiquity.

Thus Cæsar, a most accomplished writer, begins his commentaries: "*Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres*," &c. "The whole of Gaul is divided into three parts, of which the Belgæ inhabit one, the Aquitani the second, the third they who are called in their own language Celtæ, but in ours Gauls."

Here is no person, supposed to speak, or to hear: it is perfectly abrupt, but has always been admired.

When our author favors the world with an history of the age of reason, I think it is very probable he will begin with the first person, and intrust his readers with some memorable particulars of himself, before he enters upon other mat-

ters of less moment. He seems quite at a loss to know how it came to be called the Mosaic account of the creation; but supposes that the Israelites made it; "and as Moses was not an Israelite, he might not choose to contradict the tradition." How the Israelites could make this tradition, is not so easy to be understood. That Moses was as true an Israelite, as any of those he conducted from Egypt, is sufficiently clear from one circumstance, which is, that both his father and mother were Hebrews. How he could have asserted that he was not, may be accounted for on the same principles on which he has asserted an hundred other things in this book, that are neither truth, nor like the truth.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. X.

BEFORE we dismiss the venerable legislator of the Hebrews, we shall take notice of another remark which our author has made on him, expressive of that disingenuity of temper so visible in the whole of his work—"Moses was a foundling." P. 50. He seems to think it something "curious," that he and Jesus Christ were "of very obscure parentage." But, there is nothing at all curious or singular in this circumstance; because it has attended a great number of the greatest and best

men that ever lived; and it was agreeable to the usual procedure of providence, which, in appointing men to distinguished stations, makes no account of rank in birth or fortune, which ensures neither virtue nor talents, nor has any intrinsic merit. The circumstances attending the infancy of Moses, and his introduction into the court of Pharaoh, are equally to his honor, and indicative of that special providence which presided over his life, from the first moment to the close of it, and placed him, by a train of the most singular events, in that station which was to render his name dear and venerable to the end of time. He was born, and rescued from perishing by the edict of a cruel king, in a manner perfectly different from those obscure and illegitimate children, who are thrown at their birth upon the compassion of the world, and brand their parentage with infamy. Moses was of the tribe of Levi; and, probably, of a family that might have possessed particular distinction, had the people been in a state of freedom.

Leaving this, I proceed to another subject, which our author has labored with particular care, as of great moment to his design; I mean prophecy. In the introduction to his discussion, he detains us a little while with a display of his scholarship and talents for poetry and criticism, to which it will be but justice to render due honor before we go further.

"To shew that these writings (meaning the prophetical) are composed in poetical numbers, I will take ten syllables as they stand in the book, and make a line of the same number of syllables, (heroic measure) that shall rhyme with the last word; it will then be seen, that the composition of those books is poetical measure."—P. 41.

That a great part of the prophetical books, and many passages in others, were written in poetical measure, is not in the least to be doubted; but that ten syllables, accidentally connected together, in a prose translation, should prove the original to be in poetry, is a medium of proof that I believe never was before thought of by any man. On much better ground it might be proved that the originals are in prose, because the translation is such, except a few accidental examples, such as he has produced.

In the second example, taken from Jeremiah—"O that mine head were waters, and mine eyes," &c.—he adds three lines of his own, to help out the prophet, or, as he expresses it, "for the purpose of carrying out the figure, and shewing the intention of the poet." We will put them all together, to shew how effectually the figure of the prophet is carried out by his auxiliary.

"O that mine head were waters, and mine eyes"— JEREMIAH.
"Where fountains, flowing like the liquid skies;
"Then would I give the mighty flood release,
"And weep a deluge for the human race." AGE OF REASON.

The prophet, like a plain man, who aimed at expressing no more than he felt, wishes simply that his "head were waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night." But our author, scorning the bounds of a vulgar imagination, and like a truly bold, independent paraphrast, wishes that his eyes were "fountains," not flowing in their usual manner, but like the drops of rain falling from the "liquid skies;" then, after they had been flowing a sufficient time, he would give release to the mighty flood, and weep even a deluge. For such a carrying out of the figure of the prophet, I should suppose a much better preparation would have been, to have "broken up at once the fountains of the great deep, and opened the windows of heaven," and his readers would naturally have expected a proper deluge. The prophet vents his grief only for the "daughter of his people," that is, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea; our author, for the whole human race. So great is the difference between the manner of the poet of nature, and that of the factitious poetaster!

I hope it will be deemed a sufficient apology for remarks of this kind, that they are the most proper confutation of the pretensions of this man to literature and criticism, especially as his smattering in these subjects is depended on throughout his book, for overturning revelation, instead of fair

and sound argument. To shew that he has not the least idea of Hebrew poetry, instead of his "ten syllables, heroic measure," being in the manner of the original, the following are true examples of its general construction. Set in the manner of more modern poetry, they will stand thus:—

"Sing unto the Lord a new song;
"Sing unto the Lord, all the earth;
"Sing unto the Lord, and bless his name;
"Shew forth his salvation from day to day;
"Declare his glory among the heathen,
"His wonders among all the people." PSALM 96.

The following lines are of a different measure, taken from Dr. Lowth's Latin ode on the destruction of Babylon, after the 14th chapter of Isaiah, translated by Wharton:

"She is at rest; the whole earth is quiet: they break forth into singing:
"Even the firs rejoice at thee, the cedars of Libanus:
"Since thou art laid low, no feller is come up against us."

He proceeds to remark—"There is not, thro'-out the whole book called the Bible, any word that describes to us what we call a poet, nor any word that describes what we call poetry." And yet, in the very next sentence, he says—"The word prophet was the Bible word for poet, and the word prophesying meant the art of making poetry." If the Bible uses prophet for poet, and prophesying for making poetry, what other words would he

have it use? The truth of these assertions, which confute one another, we shall presently try. Had he kept a Bible, and carefully read it, before he undertook to criticise and comment upon it, he might have saved himself from thus exposing his presumption and ignorance. The true Greek classical word for poet, occurs at least in one place—Acts xvii, 28.—which is sufficient to answer his first assertion.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. XI.

THAT the word prophet, in the Bible, never means a poet, as such, nor prophesying making poetry, I can assert, with as much confidence as he uses in saying they do. Agreeable to the manner of all languages, it is usual in the originals of the Bible, the Hebrew and Greek, to apply the same word in very different senses; and there are perhaps, no words used more variously, than to prophesy, prophesying, prophesied, and prophet. But, in every instance where they occur, their immediate meaning may be determined with sufficient accuracy, to avoid any inconvenience of interpretation. If any difficulty of consequence should any where arise, from the ambiguity mentioned, it is no more than might be expected, in interpreting a dead language, especially in cases which re-

fer to very ancient usages. In discussing this subject it would be tedious, and unprofitable to my readers, to recite the various senses in which the word prophet, or the parts of the verb from which it comes, is used in the holy scriptures. It will be sufficient to my purpose to shew, in direct contradiction to this author, that whatever diversity of application they may be used in, their most common is exactly that maintained by the advocates of revelation.

A frequent meaning of this word, so obnoxious to the enemies of Christianity, is, one who possesses an extraordinary discernment of secret things, or predicts future events. In the first sense, Christ is called a prophet, by the woman of Samaria, because he told her several things respecting her life, which could not have been known by an entire stranger to her, without the discernment mentioned. In reference to this sense, and the knowledge of future events, revealed to them, on particular occasions, and the manner in which they were instructed in them, the prophets were originally called Seers. Another, and a very just sense of the word, as well as the most common, is one who speaks in the room of another, and by authority, or commission from him. This is exactly agreeable to the composition of the word in the Greek. Thus, poets were frequently, by the Greek writers, called the Prophets of the Muses,

as supposed to write or speak what they inspired, or dictated. In this sense it is used. Exod. vii, 1. God said unto Moses, "I have made thee a God to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be to thee a prophet;" or, as it is expressed before, Chap. iv, 16. "He shall be thy spokesman; he shall be to thee instead of a mouth." And as the prophets, whether inculcating moral duties, denouncing threats, or predicting events, spoke by the immediate direction, authority, and inspiration of God, they were, with the strictest propriety, called his prophets, interpreters, and spokesmen.

It is also used, in a variety of places, for one who celebrates the praises of God, either by singing alone, or accompanying it with musical instruments. To which I will add, that the verb to prophesy, is sometimes used for some extraordinary commotion or disorder of the mind, producing raving, and other extravagancies of behaviour. When "the evil spirit came upon Saul," that is, when he was seized with this phrenzy, or enthusiasm, "he prophesied in the midst of the house;" and while he was under it, "threw a javelin at David." 1 Sam. xviii, 10, 11. This use of the word evidently arose from the strong and uncommon actions, or agitations, of the prophets, while under the immediate and extraordinary influence of the divine spirit. When the young prophet, whom Elisha sent to anoint Jehu, or appoint

him to be king, had performed his office, and retired, one asked Jehu, "Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee?" though the man executed his commission with great prudence and punctuality.

I will produce only one instance more, to try what sense the word would make, on our author's interpretation. It is in the Apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, chap. 48, spoken in reference to the case of Elisha's dead body, mentioned 2 Kings xiii, 21. "No word could overcome him; and after his death, his body prophesied." This, I think, would considerably puzzle our author, on the senses he has given the word. But, it clearly means, performing an extraordinary and supernatural action, such as the prophets frequently did, as an evidence of the authenticity of their commission, when they went on the execution of their office.

"It, that is prophesying, also meant the art of playing poetry to a tune, upon any instrument of music." To do this, would, I suspect, require a more expert musician, than he is an interpreter of scripture. It is very common for an instrument to play tunes to which poetry is set; but, to play poetry itself, would require an additional faculty to any I have ever known the best instrument to possess.

"Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are not called prophets. It does not appear, from any accounts

that we have, that they could either sing, play music, or make poetry."

Whether Abraham could do all, or any of these, is not material to know: he is, however, expressly called a prophet. Gen. xx, 7. "Restore the man his wife, for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shall live," &c. Here the word means an eminently good man, in special favor with God, whose intercession would, therefore, be prevalent with him, for Abimelech, and all his household. Nor is it of any importance, whether Isaac and Jacob are expressly called prophets, or not; since there are very celebrated predictions, or prophecies recorded, of their uttering, in the scripture history. The first is that of Isaac, Gen. chap. 27. delivered for the comfort of Esau, after he lost the blessing of his birthright. "And Isaac, his father, answered and said unto him, behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother: and it shall come to pass, when thou shalt have the dominion, thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." This was very remarkably fulfilled in the history of his descendants, the Edomites, or Idumeans. The other is that of Jacob, to his sons, respecting their future characters and circumstances. That respecting Judah, is the most celebrated in the Scripture, excepting that of Da-

niel respecting the time of the Messiah's coming. Gen. xlix.

Having thus, by a sufficient number of examples, shewn how well qualified this author was to discuss the subject of prophecy, I proceed to make some remarks on it, on a different ground.

That there are several books, besides many detached passages, in other parts of the Scripture, made up of predictions, or prophecies of events, long before many of them happened, must be at once seen by the most superficial readers; and it was the internal evidences which these books bear, in the very form and manner of them, of being genuine prophecies, establishing the certainty of revelation, which drove him from considering the characters of their authenticity, to try to explain away the true meaning of prophecy.

To invalidate the testimony arising from them, in favor of revelation, it is absolutely necessary to prove that they are not prophecies at all; or, allowing them to have such a form, that they were written after the events happened, which they are supposed to foretell. It must be further proved, that they were not delivered by the men whose names they respectively bear; and that every thing said about them, however minute and circumstantial, such as the times when they lived, their parentage, the places where they uttered their prophecies, and the treatment they met with in conse-

quence of their fidelity in executing their commissions, &c. are all palpable forgeries. But, *hic labor hoc opus.* 'Till this can be done, the main pillars which support Christianity, must stand unbroken, and the Christian's hope remain more stable than the pillars of heaven.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. VII.

"I PROCEED to speak of the three principal means that have been employed in all ages, and perhaps in all countries, to impose upon mankind. Those three means are, mystery, miracle, and prophecy. The two first are incompatible with true religion, and the third ought always to be suspected."—P. 129, 130.

Of the last of these we have already said all that seemed to be necessary, in reply to his observations upon it. We will now attend him, on the first; on which, if he has made out no better than on prophecy, I think the truth of the Christian system, has nothing to apprehend, from any thing he can say.

On this subject, as is usual in this book, his observations are so desultory, that it is difficult to know how to follow him, or what he means to prove by them. We will, however, remark on those which are most to our purpose, and such as

he appears to have laid the greatest stress on. Speaking of the operations of what is called nature, which, though they present to the senses certain indubitable facts, are in themselves mysterious and inscrutable, he says, "we are therefore better off, than if we had been led into the secret, and left to do it, for ourselves," that is, what God does in these cases, independent of us. This is as good an observation as he has made, and he could scarcely have said any thing more in favor of the reasonableness of submitting to the evidences of Christianity, without too curiously enquiring into the reasons why it has been proposed in a manner and form, all the particulars of which we cannot fully comprehend. If, in this case, as in the works of nature, we have satisfactory evidence of those facts which attest its authenticity, it is sufficient for our faith, to be assured that they are true, without carrying our enquiries any farther; and "we are better off, than if we had been led into the secret."

"But, though every created thing is in this sense a mystery, the word mystery cannot be applied to moral truth, any more than obscurity can be applied to light."

Although obscurity cannot be applied to light, it always implies a degree of it. So when any doctrine of divine Revelation is said to be obscure, or mysterious; it only means as in a thousand

other cases, that though the doctrine be certain, the whole of it may not be comprehensible to our limited understandings.

The word mystery is no where, that I know of, applied in the Scriptures, to any particular moral truth, or to moral truth in general. Though he says, "it is a fog of human invention," it is a fog raised entirely by himself, and others who are on his side of the question, and which, though it blinds their own eyes, does no ways affect Christianity itself, nor those who embrace it with an humble and teachable temper.

It is used only in the New Testament, where it bears the following senses. It means the gospel in general, as a system of religion: "Great is the mystery of godliness," &c.* 1 Tim. iii, 16.

This sense of the word is exactly agreeable to its use among the Greeks and Romans, particularly the latter. We read of the mysteries or religious rites of the Bona Dea, of Ceres, of Proserpine, &c. The person who presided in the performance of these rites was called *Mystes*, the mysterious, or religious officer.

* If the word here refers particularly to the doctrines immediately mentioned, "God was manifested in the flesh," &c. it may only mean that they were great and extraordinary, peculiar to the Christian system, and to be known only by an acquaintance with it. The word is commonly used in civil life for a trade, or calling, which has certain rules peculiar to itself, to be known only by those who are instructed in them, in a regular manner.

It also means something not understood, till persons are regularly initiated into the knowledge or understanding of it. Many of the religious rites of the ancients were committed to particular persons who performed them in secret, and none but privileged people were allowed to be instructed in them. In this sense it seems to be used, Mark iv, 11: "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables;" that is, you enjoy the particular privilege of being clearly instructed into the doctrines of Christianity; while those who reject them, through unbelief, are not initiated into their true meaning and design.

It is applied also to the doctrines of the gospel, as having been imperfectly, or obscurely disclosed to the preceding ages of the world, but fully made known by the dispensation of Jesus Christ. In this sense it is used, Ephes. i, 9. It is also used in reference to its being rejected by the Jews in general, till after it should be generally embraced by the heathen nations. In this sense it is applied, Rom. xi, 15.

The apostle Paul applies it to those secret corruptions of the Christian doctrines which were beginning to work in the church, but which were not so disclosed, or publicly professed, as to be fully known or understood. In this meaning, he

calls it the mystery of iniquity, 2 Thess. ii, 7; where it also means the seeds of the opposition which should afterwards unfold themselves, against the doctrine of Christianity.

In these instances, the word has no reference to any difficulty in understanding the moral and leading principles of Christianity; but only to certain external circumstances, which no ways affect their truth and tendency. And this is sufficiently evident from the clear and intelligible manner in which every thing essential to faith is delivered in every part of the gospel.

If there are particular doctrines which cannot be fully comprehended, it is enough to know the evidences which attest their certainty and truth. As certain facts in the operation of natural causes may be fully relied on, as such, without our knowing the manner in which they take place; so, if we have sufficient proofs of the authenticity of particular doctrines of the gospel, it is perfectly rational to receive them, whether we can fully comprehend them, or not. And this may be applied to the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection, &c. without the least difficulty.

If every thing that affects our senses, is, in some sort, a mystery, why should it be charged on Christianity, as a defect, or an inconsistency, or an affront to reason, that certain doctrines belonging to it should, in some respects, be above human

comprehension? If it certainly contains the doctrines of the expiation, of the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, united in one person; if it pleased God, to reveal the Saviour of men, in the fourth, or fifth thousandth year of the world, rather than the first; or commit the oracles of divine truth to the Jews, rather than other nations; or permit them, as a people, to remain in unbelief, till the heathen should generally embrace the gospel: if these things are real facts, evidently contained in the Scriptures, I can see no reason why we should trouble ourselves about the sovereign counsel of God, in so disposing of these circumstances. Such facts have not the least connection with the arguments which oblige us to receive the Gospel, and live according to the moral precepts delivered in it. The facts themselves are all that we are under the necessity of knowing: why they took place, is a matter that does not belong to us to enquire into.

One of the greatest mysteries that I know of is, that men should puzzle themselves in subjects of divine truth; while, in those of natural knowledge, of equal difficulty, or superiority to reason, they can easily find a way of terminating their enquiries. But, the true reason appears to me to be this: they will not understand Christianity, because they do not like it; because it restrains self-love and unruly passion, and inculcates disin-

terestedness and purity of affection, and is directly opposed to the ignorance, and vanity, and confidence of the human mind.

If the whole of it should be a mystery to our author, it is no more than might be expected, in a case, where a man sets out with a design to examine nothing with seriousness, or impartiality. I will conclude this number with a passage of St. Paul, which explains the whole matter. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are perishing, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. XIII.

"As mystery answered all general purposes, miracle followed as an occasional auxiliary. The former served to bewilder the mind; the latter, to puzzle the senses." P. 134.

Miracles never did serve to puzzle the senses. They address them with an evidence that leaves no possible room to doubt whether they are done or not. It is the reasoning faculty that is puzzled, and not the senses. But this is nothing more than happens with respect to every appearance in

nature. The eye, for instance, in a sound state, is never puzzled with the sensation of light, or colors, nor the ear with that of sounds; but the understanding is very much puzzled to know how to account for these perceptions. The Jews never doubted of the miracles which Christ performed before their eyes; nor were the senses of the courteous Julius, governor of Malta, puzzled to discern whether Paul cured his father of a dysentery, or not; the fact was indubitable. So the prudent and cautious Nicodemus says to Christ: "Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, because no man can do the miracles which thou dost, except God be with him." Here there is an express acknowledgment of the miracles performed by Christ, and the doctrines they attested, on a principle universally allowed, that they were an evidence of a divine commission in the person who performed them. So, when the principal men of the Jews at Jerusalem combined to prevent the effects which the miracle performed on the lame man, Acts iii, might have on the minds of the people, they did not pretend to deny the fact, but used violent means to prevent the apostles from doing any more such, in the name of Christ. In their conference on the subject, they said, "What shall we do to these men?" That indeed, a notable, or evident miracle hath

been done by them, is manifest to all them that dwell at Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

When a man is cured of a fever, by a word, or a withered limb restored to vigor, or a dead body raised to life, there is no manner of difficulty to the senses, to know whether they are really done, or not. Nor were they even doubted of, by candid and impartial men. But, it was a great and puzzling question to some, to know how they were done. As the Jews could not deny the facts, they sometimes charged them to a confederacy with evil spirits. "This man casteth out devils, by Beelzebub the prince of devils;" the absurdity of which confuted itself. On this subject, we might make very short work with the adversaries of Christianity, and revelation, by demanding of them to disprove the facts. This we have a right to do, on the clearest principles of argumentation. If a man of a clear and unvitiated eye-sight, says there is such a color as green, and that it is extremely agreeable to the eye, and a blind man should attempt to argue that it is unreasonable to believe there is such a color at all, it lies on him to prove either that there is no such color, or that the other is incapable of seeing it.

We will however, condescend so far to our antagonists, as to hear how well they can reason on indubitable matters of fact; or, in other words,

how far their speculations will go towards over-setting the testimony of the senses.

Let us hear our author a little further: "Mankind have conceived to themselves certain laws by which, what they call nature, is supposed to act; and that a miracle is something contrary to the operation and effect of those laws." P. 135.

That we know very little of the operations of nature, we as readily acknowledge as he; but, whether it be agreeable to such operations of nature, as may be called general laws, or not, for a body really dead, to recover life, or, for a man blind from his birth to recover his sight, by a touch, or a word, we have no manner of difficulty in determining. Such things we do as certainly know, as we know any thing at all, are not in the established order of nature; and no man in his senses would pretend to say that they are. We must then take the advantage that we have over the enemies of Christianity, of calling upon them to disprove the miracles which we believe were performed to attest the truth of it. If they will do this, we can have nothing further to say, and they will avoid all the trouble and perplexity of that mode of reasoning to which they recur, and which is more puzzling to the mind, than any miracle can be to the senses.

Of reasoning on their plan, there is no end; it can never terminate the question. The other, will bring it immediately to a conclusion.

After all their reasoning, as they are pleased to call it, it is very clear, that God has dealt with us, with regard to the evidences of Christianity, as he has done, in the works of nature; he has presented our senses with facts which they cannot question; but has concealed from us the principles on which they are performed. Further, they were the only evidences of the truth of Christianity which were level to all capacities, and left no room for hesitation. He could give no stronger evidences, nor any that could be so universally understood. We accordingly find, that their evidence was never doubted by those who saw them. We are then obliged to recur to the question, were they done, or were they not?

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. XIV.

NOTWITHSTANDING that it is entirely incumbent on the antagonists of Christianity, and the Bible, to prove that the facts recorded in the Scriptures, as miracles, were not really performed, we are not afraid to bring the subject to any inves-

tigation that the most scrupulous inquirer can demand, or wish for. We will, then, hear our author a little farther on the subject, to give him an opportunity of displaying the whole force of his argument against miracles.

"Nothing can be more inconsistent than to suppose that the Almighty would make use of means, such as are called miracles, that would subject the person who performed them to the suspicion of being an impostor; and the persons who related them, to be suspected of lying; and the doctrine intended to be supported thereby, to be suspected as a fabulous invention."

Here, every thing on the subject is begged, but nothing at all argued, or proved: if miracles were really calculated to produce effects directly the reverse, in every thing, of what they were intended to produce, they would be inconsistent to the highest degree. But, it appears, that they were always wrought with a view to avoid every inconvenience he supposes they must necessarily occasion. They were intended to free the operator from the suspicion of imposture, and to establish the doctrines he delivered; and those who witnessed them, were no more liable to be suspected of lying, on relating them, than in relating any other facts they were supposed to have seen, or certainly known.

Through the whole time, from Moses to Malachi, that is, about eleven hundred years, reckoning from the time the former entered on his public office, miracles were considered by the Israelites, as authenticating the commission of their prophets, ratifying their doctrines, and obliging those to whom they were sent, to acknowledge and receive them, as the messengers of God. And in the same light they considered them, in the time of Christ and his apostles.

On this principle, universally acknowledged among them, it was, that they so frequently called upon him to work miracles to attest the extraordinary authority, and commission, which he claimed. "Then certain of the Scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, "master, we would see a sign from thee." Mat. xii. 38.

In another place, "they said unto him, what sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work?" John vi. 30. And to justify themselves, in making this demand, they refer to the miracle of the manna, wrought in the wilderness, to attest the special presence of God among the forefathers.

The truth of the observations I have just made, respecting the prevailing opinions of the Jews, on miracles, is fully confirmed by that memorable conversation between the Pharisees, and the man blind from his birth, who was cured of his

defect, by the power of Jesus Christ.—John ix. The passage is exceedingly interesting, of the most perfect simplicity of narration, and full to my purpose: I will therefore go over such parts of it, as are directly to the scope of these remarks.

On this man's relating to the Pharisees the manner of his cure, without pretending to deny the fact, they charged Christ with immorality, as having performed it on the Sabbath. As this would not do, they pretended to doubt whether the man had been really blind from his birth. When they were certified of this, by his parents, they called the man again; and, not doubting of the miracle, they said, "Give God the praise; we know that this man (meaning Christ) is a sinner." After a little more conversation, in which they gave way to passion, rather than pursued argument, they say, "We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this man, we know not from whence he is." "The man answered, and said unto them, 'why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now, we know that God heareth not sinners; but, if any man will do his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."

In every particular, it contradicts every thing said by our author, on the tendency of miracles. It proves that they were common amongst the Jews, in the preceding history of their nation; that he who performed them was acknowledged to have a divine commission; that they were indubitable proofs of a particular energy of God accompanying the performer; and that it was contrary to an opinion universally received, to refuse the character of a prophet of God to him.

To these remarks, I will add, in another view, that the miracles of Christ are acknowledged by both Jews and Pagans, as well as Christians. Of the truth of this, there are abundant records, which no man of reading can deny, without rendering himself liable to the charge of ignorance, or an entire disregard to the best authenticated facts. The celebrated Jewish historian, Josephus, though not professedly a friend to Christianity, has a remarkable passage to the honor of Jesus Christ, which I will quote in part, for the sake of those who are not acquainted with it. Speaking of the time when Pilate was governor of Judea, he says—"At that time there was one Jesus, a wise man, if he may be called a man: for he performed wonderful works, and taught the truth to those who willingly adhered to him. Many both of the Jews and heathen attached themselves to him."—Book 18, ch. 6. Now, this passage is

very full in proof of the real miracles of Christ, as being handed to us by an historian of unquestionable integrity, who seems to have had no other view in mentioning these facts as things of the most public notoriety in Judea, than to support the fidelity of history, and enrich it with the most interesting narrations. Neither Julian, nor Porphyry, nor Celsus, the most inveterate pagan adversaries of Christianity, pretend to deny the truth of the miracles of Christ; but ascribe them to the power of magic, which they say he had learned in Egypt. Let those who doubt them, prove that they never took place.

From the premises this is a just conclusion; the truth of miracles was allowed by the Jews; they proved the authenticity of the commission of those who performed them; they subjected no man to the suspicion of falsehood who related them; and they obliged those who saw them, or heard them from credible witnesses, to obey the injunctions of the performers. And this is all we are concerned to know about them.

Reasoning upon the possibility of things actually done, is much like asking a man who sees the light, to prove that there is really such an element.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. XV.

Having said all that seemed to be necessary, in reply to our author, on prophecy, mystery, and miracles—on which, however, I may probably offer something further at another time—I proceed to remark on detached sentences of his work. The whole, indeed, is made up of such detached sentences, in which there is discovered neither talents nor impartiality, nor an accurate acquaintance with any of the subjects he has touched on, nor respect for religion.

In P. 128, he says—"It is possible to believe, and I always feel a pleasure in encouraging myself to believe it, that there have been men in the world who persuaded themselves that what is called a pious fraud, might, at least, under particular circumstances, be productive of some good." This, if I am not mistaken, is a key to all that he has advanced against Christianity. He felt a pleasure in encouraging, that is, in persuading himself to believe, that there have been men so dishonest as to inculcate the doctrines of Christianity, as true, though at the same time they knew them to be false; and yet, so well disposed as to promote them, because they thought they would do good. This is mere contradiction; because, a man who is so dishonest as to promote as a truth, what he knows to be a falshood, would

never have the goodness to aim at the benefit of mankind; the love of falshood and benevolence, are perfectly incompatible. It is impossible that a good man may endeavor to propagate an error, knowing it to be such. And yet, our author "feels a pleasure in encouraging himself to believe" there are men capable of such an enormous immorality. When a man can entertain such sentiments of others, without evident proof, "he is prepared," I will not say, "for the commission of every crime," but, to think and say the worst things possible of them. Hobbes persuaded himself, first, to be nearly an Atheist, and then he encouraged himself to believe that all mankind were wild beasts, who could be tamed by nothing but the potent curb of a rigid government. He was, however, a man of talents and philosophical knowledge, with whom our author will bear no comparison. But, let us hear how he ends the matter, and we shall be the better able to discover his profound acquaintance with his subject.

"The persons who first preached the Christian system of faith, and in some measure combined with it the morality preached by Jesus Christ, might persuade themselves that it was better than the heathen mythology that then prevailed."

The persons who first preached the Christian system of faith, after Jesus Christ,* were twelve

* I mean by his direction.

men chosen for this purpose, by Christ himself, formally commissioned to their office, and expressly taught what they were to preach, on what motives they were to act, and how they were in all respects, to conduct themselves. After these, there were seventy others sent out, two by two, in like manner instructed, to go before him, as heralds, into all the cities and places where he himself intended to go. Whatever, then, the fraud was, they could not have been the framers or inventors of it; they preached only as they were taught. Two or three years after this, Saul, a young man, who had just completed his education at Jerusalem, under the celebrated Gamaliel, before he had given himself time to examine the evidences of Christianity, instigated by an honest but mistaken zeal, while on his way to Damascus with a commission from the high priest, to exterminate the Christians there, was miraculously converted, and immediately became as zealous an advocate for it, as he had before been an antagonist to it. He received his instructions immediately from Christ himself, went directly into Arabia to preach the Gospel, and did not see any of the apostles or disciples in Judea, for several years afterwards. See Gal. i. ii. Chaps.—"I neither received it of man, nor was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus." Chap. i, Verse 12.

Whatever then, might have been the case with the other apostles, it is plain St. Paul could have had no part in the supposed fraud: yet he preached the same doctrines. But, will this author, or any other antagonist to Christianity, tell us, when, where, and by whom, the fraud was invented? This they are bound to do, if Christianity is a fraud; and not leave us to be deluded by the artifice of designing men.

If, indeed, it be a fraud, as our author says, it is of the most singular nature, in all respects, that ever was framed by mankind. Neither the time when, nor the place where, nor the persons by whom, nor the design of it, nor the manner of the combination, ever have been, nor ever can be told. Nor has it, in the face of it, one single mark of an invention, or a fraud.

For besides, that the whole history of it is as well authenticated, as any history in the world, it is impossible to suppose, on any ground of probability, that the men who first propagated it, could either have thought it a fraud, or have had the least doubt of its authenticity. They left their families, and other connexions, their houses, and lands; they renounced ease, worldly pleasure, honor, wealth, and preferment; and exposed themselves, by a voluntary fortitude, to reproach, hunger, fatigue, danger, persecution, and death in its most sensible form; and besides foregoing

all that men count dear in this world, they exposed themselves, and went with their eyes open, to the most certain and terrible misery, in the world to come, on supposition they knew it to be a fraud. Such a part in men of common understanding, is beyond the reach of human nature. Men may propagate a known fraud, through worldly interest; but, it is not within the power of mankind to propagate it, to their evident and certain detriment. The first promoters of Christianity, had they known, or suspected it to be a fraud, must have acted on principles totally different from any established law of human nature. They must have been influenced by motives which were never known to actuate the very worst of the human race; the mere desire of imposing on mankind, not only without any prospect of advantage to themselves, but, on their own principles, with the certain expectation of inevitable ruin.

Further, if the Christian system be a fraud, it is a fraud containing the most sublime doctrines, and the most perfect morality; the most benevolent in its intentions, the most disinterested in its motives, and the most directly calculated, in all respects, to raise human nature to the highest possible state of improvement and happiness. To suppose such a system, requiring such talents, indicating such a sublime way of thinking, such purity of affection, such a sincere and rational

devotion, to have been invented by designing, and dishonest men, requires a way of thinking, without regard to reason, or the established order of rational beings. It is the part of those spirits only who are doo ned to endless misery, beyond possibility of reformation, to aim at doing evil, for the sake of making others unhappy, to the aggravation of their own wretchedness. I will add, that those men who reason and write against Christianity, which, if they were even able to confute, would gain nothing by their success, act much such a part* as the man who burnt the temple of Diana t Ephesus, though he knew he would die for the deed, and no body would be the better for it. He only meant to be remembered. I do not say that such men mean the injury of mankind; but, if they were so unfortunately successful, as to reason men out of their faith in Christianity, neither they, nor others would be gainers by it: their success would be their ruin. But, they never can succeed.

The remaining remarks of our author on this part of his subject, I will examine in my next number. In the mean time, I wish every man who thinks as he does, to take up the subject, and shew the advocates of Christianity the fraud of that system in which they trust for eternal life.

ARTEMAS.

* In respect of doing no good to others, or themselves.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. XVI.

"From the first preachers the fraud went on to the second, and to the third, till the idea of its being a pious fraud became lost in the belief of its being true; and that belief was again encouraged by the interest of those who made a livelihood by preaching it."

This explains the whole matter as minutely as if the author had been present when the fraud was first invented and propagated, and had traced it through all its succeeding progress. Here it is supposed that the first preachers of Christianity knew it to be a fraud, and the second knew it, and the third knew it; but, at last, by some means which it is not lawful to tell, the idea of its being a fraud, became lost in the belief of its being true. It is very surprizing how this belief came about. Why the tenth or twentieth succession of preachers should not know the fraud, as well as the first, I cannot see. When did they come to believe it to be true, seeing it had all along been propagated as a known fraud? Then, after it had, by some means, been believed to be true, it must have been suspected, if not known to be a fraud again, as those who made a livelihood by preaching it, again encouraged the belief of its being true. This, if I am not mistaken, is inextricable confusion, and shews the wretched shifts to which men

are driven, who undertake so hopeless a cause as that of confuting Christianity. There is no man living, of any talents and sagacity, that can make out the consistency of this sentence. First, Christianity is preached as a known fraud, how long, we are not told; then, it is preached as true; then it is suspected to be a fraud again; then it is again preached as true, or the belief of it is encouraged.

If a man were to write in this manner on science, or any subject of common import, he would be considered as deranged in his understanding, and nobody would think it worth while to read him. But such is the infatuation into which God permits men to fall, who oppose his most wise and benevolent work. If such be the reasoning of these great advocates of reason, may the lovers of truth never be permitted to fall into it. It is enough to provoke the indignation of the friends of infidelity, to see their cause so exposed to derision.

He says in one place—"Jesus Christ was a virtuous and amiable man." That he commissioned the first and second, and third preachers of Christianity, and instructed them in the doctrines they were to publish, is as unquestionable, as that there was such a person; how, then, did they come to preach a fraud? Did they mistake him, and preach different from his instructions? Or, how did the fraud come about? Will this author,

or any other advocate for his opinions, tell us, how the disciples of "a virtuous and amiable man," expressly and particularly instructed by him, should come to preach a known fraud, contrary to the whole intent of their mission, which was, to publish to the Jewish nation, that he was the promised Messiah, the long expected deliverer? This was the first thing they taught, to engage men to receive him; and to convince them that he was the Messiah, they were instructed and empowered to work various miracles, not as matters of amusement, but of the most benevolent nature; not in their own names, but in his, which we find through the whole gospel history, they did, in the most disinterested manner, on every occasion renouncing all claim to the honor of the wonders they performed. This circumstance alone, I think, sufficiently demonstrates the integrity of the first preachers, because it is entirely above the common temper of mankind. Another remarkable circumstance is, that they honestly record the faults of one another, and the reproofs given them by their master; which is extremely different from the manner of men combined in a fraud, for the sake of imposing on the world, through selfish and secular views.

That it may the more clearly appear that there could not possibly be any fraud in those who preached the gospel, during the life of Jesus

Christ, I will cite the terms of their commission, as expressly given to them by himself. The account, as handed to us by St Luke, is this—"Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick."—Luke ix, to the 5th verse. "And they departed and went through the towns preaching the gospel, and healing every where." 6. "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two, before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come," &c.—Luke x, to the 12th verse. "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us, through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on scorpions and serpents, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall be able to hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."--Luke x, from 17th to 20th verse. After his resurrection he renewed the commission of the eleven remaining apostles, in these words. "And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, that is, to men of all nations and descriptions: he that believeth and is bap-

tized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Mark xvi. 15, 18.

I will now ask any candid and unprejudiced man, if there is in the world, any piece of history with stronger marks of authenticity than this? And, if its authenticity be granted, there is an end to all reasoning on the subject, and the notion of the fraud of the first preachers of the gospel, vanishes into air. If "Christ was a virtuous and amiable man;" if he really did commission the first preachers of the gospel, and they acted according to his commission, it was not possible there could be any fraud in the matter. As to any frauds that have since been committed, under the profession of Christianity, they have nothing more to do with the thing itself, than the mistakes which men daily make in reasoning, have to do with sound reason.

It would be easy to shew, from a variety of other circumstances, that the preachers of the gospel, in the time of Christ and the apostles, could not possibly either have known or suspected it to be a fraud; if they did, they acted as men

without common understanding; but, when men are determined to treat Christianity on different principles, and to reason concerning it, in a different way from what they reason on all other subjects, it is in vain to attempt to convince them. And, it is not to such men as our author, that I address these observations; but to those who are capable of being candid and impartial.

Had there been any fraud in Christianity, it must long since have been detected, and laid open to the world; as it has had the greatest number of enemies to scrutinize it, and the greatest number of friends of the most profound and philosophical genius and knowledge, to examine and illustrate its evidences, of any religion that was ever published to mankind; and yet, it has prevailed, and no doubt will prevail; and the more carefully it is examined, both by friends and enemies, the more indubitable will its authenticity appear, and the more its truth will be confirmed.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. XVII.

IN page 97, our author says—"It is impossible for us now to know at what time the heathen mythology began; but it is certain, from the internal evidence it carries, that it did not begin in the same state or condition in which it ended." This

is exceedingly probable, nay, quite certain, as nothing in the universe begins in the same state in which it ends. The beginning and ending of every thing must always be entirely different from one another. "All the gods of that mythology, except Saturn, were of modern invention." All, or most of the gods of that mythology, were in existence in the time of Homer, near three thousand years ago: and if he may be reckoned a modern, I know not where we are to look for the ancients. "The supposed reign of Saturn was prior to that which is called the heathen mythology, and was so far a species of theism, that it admitted the belief of only one God." The supposed reign of Saturn is as much a fable as any other part of the heathen mythology, and is so far from admitting the belief of only one God, that Titan was his supposed elder brother, and made over his right to him, on certain conditions, which every school boy may know from his pantheon or dictionary. "Saturn is supposed to have abdicated his government in favor of his three sons and one daughter, Jupiter, Pluto, Neptune and Juno." Saturn abdicated his government in favor of Jupiter, much in the same manner as Charles the 1st of England, abdicated his in favor of Cromwell, and as the late Louis of France abdicated his in favor of the nation: he was obliged to do it, and glad to get off to Italy with his life.

From this we shall go back to something more serious, though in some connexion with it. "It is not difficult to account for the credit that was given to the story of Jesus Christ being the son of God. He was born at a time when the heathen mythology had still some fashion and repute in the world, and that mythology had prepared the people for the belief of such a story." Though the heathen mythology had some fashion in the world at the time when Christ was born, it had not the least repute in fashion where he was born. No people could be more averse to any thing, than the body of the Jews were, at that time, to the whole of it. They were better prepared than any people in the world, to reject all the mythology, because their religion taught them to acknowledge the one true God alone.

"It was conformable to the opinions that then prevailed among the people called Gentiles or Mythologists, (by the way, Gentiles and Mythologists are words of very different import) and it was only these people who believed it. The Jews never credited the story." The story was first credited by them, and they were the first people who published it; though the body of the nation rejected that and every other part of the Gospel, for which they gave a very serious account. The apostles, the seventy disciples, the five thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, or about that

time; some members of the Sanhedrim, a multitude of the priests, and for some time, all the converts to Christianity were of the Jews, and believed it as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel.

As to the Gentiles, their mythology was so far from preparing them to believe it, that it was one principal bar in the way of their receiving the Gospel, which was directly opposed to their whole system of religion. It was for this very reason that their philosophers and leading men set themselves to check its progress by raising the prejudices of the people against it, as inimical to their established opinions of a plurality of gods, and other superstitions of their mythology. The great tumult and outcry raised against some of the apostles at Ephesus, was because they had preached that "they are no gods that are made with hands." And the reason why the Roman senate rejected the proposal of Tiberius, to have Jesus Christ enrolled among the deities was, because his doctrines were directly opposed to a multiplicity of Gods, and all the other fables of superstition maintained by them Every obstacle that perverted reason and prejudice, and worldly interest could throw in the way of the belief of Christ's divinity, and every other peculiar doctrine of Christianity, was done by the heathen philoso-

phers, priests and princes, to prevent its gaining credit, and overturning the fabric of mythology.

"It is curious to observe how the theory of what is called the Christian church sprung out of the tail of the heathen mythology. A direct incorporation took place in the first instance, by making the reputed founder to be celestially begotten." No two systems could possibly be more widely different, in their origin, doctrines, rites, and tendency, than the Christian theory and the heathen mythology; a fire might as soon generate from water, and this incorporate with oil, as the Christian theory either spring from that mythology, or admit of an incorporation with it, or the least approach towards it. Besides, if, as he says, "all the gods of that mythology, except Saturn, were of modern invention, and only the tail of it existed when Christianity sprung up, where are we to find the body and the head? It is certain, and no man of reading can be ignorant of it, that it was in full vigor when Christianity commenced, and only declined as this increased. Ten grievous persecutions of the latter were set on foot, and carried on with the utmost rigor, by the Roman government, to support the system of mythology; and, as it was not possible they could subsist together, nor that the Gospel should be overthrown, or confined, the latter grew and mightily prevailed, 'till it had established itself on the ruins of the

former. So little appearance is there of any congenial principles existing between them.

Speaking of the Christian system again, he observes—"It yet remains to reason and philosophy to abolish the amphibious fraud." Much better reasoning and philosophy than any he has exhibited in his book, have been industriously employed to abolish Christianity, for near two thousand years; and it yet remains unimpaired, and I think we may rest secure that it never will be abolished. The best reasoners and most eminent philosophers, always have been, and still are on its side; and in the same degree as genuine reason and philosophy improve, Christianity will acquire increasing credit and influence.

Having mentioned the morality preached by Jesus Christ, he says—"Similar systems of morality had been preached by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before," &c. As to what Confucius preached, I know very little, and suspect our author to be much in the same predicament. "It is asserted by the missionaries of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, that he was wholly unacquainted with, or purposely neglected, the doctrine of a future life, and that in his moral system he paid little regard to religion."* Whether this be true or not, I pretend not to say. We may as rationally believe

* History of Philosophy.

them, as any others who had an opportunity of knowing his doctrines. If it be as they report, then his system differed from that of Jesus Christ, in the most necessary and fundamental points; and I have no doubt that it did. We can very confidently say, that no similar system of morality was ever preached before Christ, nor has been since.

The following particulars distinguish his system from every other, ever published. It made the belief of his being the promised Messiah and Saviour, an essential article of obedience to the will of God. It rested the whole of its authenticity on the necessity of his death, as a true expiatory sacrifice; and his resurrection, after his death, as an infallible testimony of the validity of his sufferings, to atone for the sins of men. He enforced it, as supreme lawgiver of the world, who had, in himself, the absolute right of giving laws to the universe. He urged the motives to obey his commands, entirely from regard to another world. The motives he proposed were rewards and punishments, which were entirely at his own dispensing. One of the most solemn and influential was, that he should be the final judge, in determining the state of mankind, in another world, according as they had obeyed his commands, or neglected them. Another important article in his system, was, that his subjects, or disciples, should

depend on his promises, with an implicit confidence in all circumstances. All these particulars were essential points of morality in his system; and no founder of any other religion has ever been so extravagant and presumptuous, as to form any system on similar principles. What systems of Greek philosophers he refers to, as similar to that of Christ, I do not know; as he has been prudent enough not to mention any of them. They have all of them very essential and evident defects, which it would be easy to shew, if necessary. But, we can as easily give him implicit confidence in this particular, as in any other.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. XVIII.

PASSING by many things which this man has said respecting the Bible, that equally expose his ignorance, indelicacy and irreligion, I shall next take notice of a sentence in which he appears to have made his strongest effort against it, and at which he might very well have stopped. "When we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executious, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we call it the word of a Demon, than the word of God. It is an history of wickedness that

has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and for my own part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest every thing that is cruel." P. 39.

From this it appears, that the subject in the scripture history which has most provoked his detestation, is the cruelty contained in it; the rest we may suppose he can bear with. But, either he is entirely ignorant of what constitutes the chief merit and excellence of history, or his extreme sensibility has most egregiously over ruled his judgment and betrayed him into an opinion of the sacred history, which completely exposes him to the derision of every competent judge of such subjects.

But, before examining the merit of this violent censure, I cannot avoid remarking, that it is not a little surprizing how a man, who affects so high a degree of sensibility, should have allowed himself to say so many bitter things against the Bible, knowing it must be extremely disagreeable and offensive to every person attached to that divine book. Had he reflected but a moment, before he wrote it, he must have been convinced that it was not possible for him to hold the history of the Bible in greater detestation, than every serious Christian must hold such a sentence, from whatever principle it was dictated.

Pray, what sort of an history would he have had the sacred writers give us? A true one, or a

false? A just picture of the people and ages to which there histories extend; or a fine, pleasing one of things that never existed? The last might very well serve to amuse light and volatile minds, who prefer fiction to reality; but could not afford the least satisfaction to men desirious of knowing the true state of mankind in the early ages of the world. The very things he mentions to the discredit of the sacred history, must, to every man of discernment, appear to be the strongest marks of its authenticity and utility.

The sacred historians have not only given us the most unquestionable proofs of their fidelity in relating facts, but of their accurate knowledge of the characters, customs and manners, trade and commence, religion and government, and principal personages and transactions of the different nations and ages comprized within the limits of their histories. And, if any thing beyond their internal evidence can be required to strengthen their credibility, it is abundantly afforued by the most authentic profane histories that have traced the same times and people with them; of which circumstace no man tolerably acquainted with history can be ignorant.

What are the most celebrated histories in the world, but records of the mistakes, violence, treacheries, ambition, oppression, cruelties and miseries of mankind? What but accounts of these forms

the chief part of the histories of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Greeks and Romans, and every other nation both ancient and modern, that has made any considerable figure in the annals of time?

Does not the excellence of all these histories consist in transmitting to us facts, characters, &c. as far as they could be ascertained by the writers of them? What else would we wish to find in them, but such accounts, whether pleasing or painful as they either knew themselves, or could reasonably credit, on the reports of preceding writers?

It is the supposed credibility of history, whatever be the subject, that induces men of understanding and curiosity to read, it, with a view to know what has been the real state of mankind in past ages; and not to be amused with fictitious details, which no experience of the world would justify or render probable.

It is to the honor of the sacred historians, and an high recommendation of their writings, that, while they clearly and faithfully record the vices and disorder of mankind, they also record the dreadful and exterminating calamities which God often sent upon them, as the punishment of their pride and haughtiness, injustice and cruelty, debaucheries, infidelity and impiety.

In these details, they disguise no facts, they palliate no errors, they flatter no characters,

They neither spare the rich nor the powerful; neither judges, priests nor kings, when they find any thing in their conduct, either in private or public life, deserving of their censure.

They are generally clear and concise in their narrations; distinct and strong in their characters; just and pious in their reflections. They appear to have been men not only of accurate information in the people and periods of which they write, but of unshaken integrity; whose chief object in their writings is to recommend reverence and obedience to God, and justice to mankind, as the only way to safety, prosperity and happiness. They present us with an history of Divine Providence with respect to the nations whose histories they have touched on; and in this view nothing can be more instructive or interesting; nothing more serious and affecting, or better adapted to regulate our temper and manners, instead of corrupting and brutalizing them.

Another excellence of the sacred history is, that it goes much farther back than any other can pretend to, and even presents us with an exact and very satisfactory account of the first families of mankind; their settlements, migrations, employments, revolutions, virtues and vices, and whatever besides can gratify a reasonable curiosity. In the 10th and 11th chaps. of Genesis, we find more minute and useful information with respect to the

first men, than in all other histories in the world; which indeed, on that subject,, are nothing but confusion and contradiction, in which no reader of discernment can find the least satisfaction.

Must we then reject all history because it relates the debaucheries, cruelties and oppressions of mankind? Or, must we reject that only which is contained in the Bible? That only, beyond doubt, if we would take the reasoning, or rather the assertions of such men as our author, for our rule. But we will not take it; having, in this case, even the common sense of mankind on our side, for common sense will determine that every history is valuable in proportion to the clearness, copiousness and fidelity with which it rehearses facts, and the importance of the facts themselves for the information and direction of mankind: and if any history be deserving, on these accounts, of respect and veneration, that of the Bible is most so. And he who, on a fair comparison, does not vastly prefer it to any other, as possessing every excellence that can belong to history, is either destitute of all just discernment and taste in such writing, or under the influence of incorrigible prejudice. Which of these, or whether both, be the case with our author, I leave every reader to judge.

ARTEMAS.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. XIX.

Supposing the history of the Bible to be, what he says it is, "an history of wickedness," where lies the fault? Is it in the historians, who have given us facts as they found them, or in the people whose manners and characters they have recorded? Certainly not in the former; or we must condemn the best and most valuable historians that ever have written. We must particularly censure Thucydides, for his history of the Peloponnesian war; Quintus Curtius, for that of Alexander, a most atrocious highwayman, and destroyer of mankind; Sallust, for his of the conspiracy of Cataline, and the corrupt and dissolute manners of that age; Suetonius, for his lives of the twelve Cæsars, full of the most shocking enormities; and and above all, the most excellent Josephus, who has recorded as many and affecting examples of vice and human wretchedness, as can be found in any history of the same extent.

Indeed, on the principles of this foolish and malicious censure of the scripture history, we ought not only to detest, but to throw into the fire, not only those excellent authors abovementioned, but the greatest part of all history, both ancient and modern, to prevent it from corrupting and brutalizing the world: but, there is no man, I am per-

suaded, the least qualified to estimate its value, who would not much rather that the "Age of Reason," and the philosophical works of Bollingbroke, and all other books of the same stamp and tendency, were at this moment in their destined oblivion, than lose one well written history of any age or nation of the world.

It is not by faithful and judicious historians that the principles of mankind are corrupted and their manners brutalized; but by such petty, wrong-headed, and self-confident philosophers, as they would be called, who give themselves out to be the only admirers and disciples of sound reason and the true primitive religion; the only men of sincerity, liberality, benevolence, and I know not how many other good qualities, that raise them far above the rest of mankind.

It is by the principles of those men who, by profound meditation and the successful culture of natural reason, have discovered that there is no providence to govern the world, nor revelation to enlighten it; that miracles are fictions or magical delusions; that Christianity is a fraud, a superstition, an affront to the reason of philosophers; that there is no other rule of morality and religion than a man's own opinion; that there is no future state, or none but a state of happiness; and therefore, that the wisest course is to make the most we can of the present life, without troubling our-

selves about any thing farther: it is by such principles that mankind are most effectually corrupted and injured; and not by histories of the crimes and calamities of past ages. These are the plainest instructors and most faithful monitors, and more certainly arrest the attention and impress the heart, than the best maxims of civil wisdom or precepts of moral duty, when unaccompanied with examples of history that the best maxims for the conduct of life are drawn; and by these the supreme excellency of the moral precepts of the Bible is most clearly illustrated, and most forcibly recommended. I will add, that in this respect, and indeed in every other, the sacred history has an obvious superiority over the most celebrated in the world. As to its composition, it is clear, well-connected, makes use of the gravest and most dignified language; has the greatest number of apposite and lively figures; the finest examples of the pathetic, the strongest and most picturesque descriptions, and the most sublime sentiments that writing can afford. It most clearly unfolds the true principles and state of human nature; most exactly traces effects to their proper causes, and shews, beyond any other, the true means by which individuals and communities arise to power and opulence; or, from the heights of prosperity and distinction, sink into insignificance and oblivion.

The events also recorded in it are of the most interesting and marvellous nature. The accounts of the creation, deluge, the confusion of tongues, the calling of Abraham, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the deliverence of the Israelites from Egypt, the destruction of Pharaoh and his army, the journey through the wilderness with all its marvellous circumstances, the conquest of Canaan, to mention no others, are in the highest degree interesting; and nothing in the best profane histories can be mentioned with them.

The memoirs of the patriarchs are written with perfect simplicity, abound with the most entertaining and instructive incidents, the most agreeable pictures of ancient manners, and the most instructive and consolatory hints on the interest of pious men in the care of Divine Providence. On the sovereignty of God in the government of the world, in the promotion or downfall of individuals and nations, in the punishment of vice and rewards of virtue, it affords the clearest instruction and most solemn admonition.

On this head there is one passage so very remarkable, that I cannot forbear mentioning it. When Rehoboam had determined to compel, by force of arms, the ten revolted tribes to return to their allegiance to him, the prophet Shemaiah was sent to him and the people of Judah and Benjamin, with this message: " Ye shall not go up nor fight

against your brethren the children of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing is from me." 1. Kings 12. Before this, the historian remarks on the conduct of Rehoboam in preferring the advice of the young men to that of the old and experienced courtiers of his father: "for the cause was from the Lord." This, I am sensible, is a doctrine extremely offensive to the pride of man; but it is, at the same time, universally inculcated in the sacred history, and it is in vain to oppose it. In a word, the sacred history every where enforces the most perfect morality, and proposes the most influential motives to virtue and piety. The honor of God, and the good of mankind, appear to be the main and only objects of these great and excellent men.

These remarks are principally with a view to the history of the Old Testament; though they are equally applicable to that of the New. The latter indeed has some eminent advantages over the former; the subjects are softer and more pleasing; it has nothing to do with politics, the intrigues of courts, the levying of armies, the revolutions of states, or the horrors of war. It is a plain, calm and faithful history of the accomplishment of ancient prophecies in the life, sufferings, doctrines and various benefits bestowed on the world by Jesus Christ, the true and adorable Messiah.

The accounts of his nativity, his public appearance, his miracles, his affability and condescension, his tenderness and compassion to the distressed; the dignity and authority of his discourses, the gravity and majesty of his deportment, his patience and meekness under reproaches and persecution; the circumstances of his trial before Pilate, his crucifixion, resurrection, affectionate and edifying intercourse with his disciples afterwards; and, finally, his ascension into heaven, are facts the most singular, pleasing and astonishing, that can possibly be read.

The style of the historians of this divine person, is perfectly easy, correct and beautiful, and must ever be admired by all men of true taste to say nothing of religion.

In the history of the acts of the apostles, written by St. Luke, a scholar and physician, there are comprized more beauties of style, more lively descriptions, more elegant and instructive discourses, and more interesting incidents, than ever were united in any composition of the same compass.

The descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of pentecost, and the gift of tongues it conferred on the disciples; the boldness, but benevolence of the apostles in publishing the gospel; their heroism, but meekness under persecution; the conversion of St. Paul,* his magnanimity under sufferings,

* See Ld. Littleton's excellent discourse on this subject.

and the account of his voyage to Rome, superior to every thing of the kind, are all described in terms at once the most entertaining, surprizing and edifying. And he who reads them merely as a scholar and critic, and does not find in them more elegant entertainment, to say nothing more, than the best profane history in the world, is incapable of relishing or discerning the excellencies of such composition.

I may safely add, that let any man produce, from the most celebated profane history that was ever written any beauty that he please, there may be found in the sacred history, not only one, but many examples superior in their kind; nay of incomparable superiority.

The cavil, therefore, of our author is perfectly frivolous and contemptable, and equally betrays his want of judgment and principle.

ARTEMAS.

P. S. The reason of this postscript will at once occur to those who have read the City Gazette of the 6th of May.*

* Artemas originally appeared in the *City Gazette:* this portscript refers to a piece signed *Amen*, addressed to Artemas, the purport of which was: "You have undertaken an arduous task—no less than that of attempting to make delusion and error triumph (even in this age of reason) over truth and light. But with those who have had the opportunity of reading Hume, Bollingbroke, Voltaire and other eminent authors, your opinions will have little weight." *Ed.*

Because the adversaries of Christianity prefer the easier method of setting up names against it, to that of advancing argument; and as Bollingbroke is usually placed at the head of the champions of infidelity, I have thought proper to subjoin the following opinions of his writings by two critics of eminence in the literary world; by which it will appear what sort of thinkers and reasoners they are, who set him up as a great and profound philosopher.

"In his reasonings, for most part, he is flimsy and false; in his political writings, factious; in what he calls his philosophical ones, irreligious and sophistical in the highest degree."

"It is my opinion that there are few writings in the English language, which, for the matter contained in them, can be read with less profit and fruit, than Lord Bollingbroke's works. His posthumous, or, as they are called, his philosophical works, wherein he attacks religion, are as loose in the style, as they are flimsy in the reasoning. An unhappy instance this author is, of parts and genius so miserably perverted by faction and passion, that, as his memory will descend to posterity with little honor, so his productions will soon pass, and are, indeed, already passing into neglect and oblivion"*—the inevitable destiny of such writings and such men.

* Blair's Lectures.

"When Tully attempted poetry, he became as ridiculous as Bollingbroke when he attempted philosophy and divinity. We look in vain for that genius which produced the dissertation on parties, in the tedious philosophical works; of which it is no exaggerated satire to say, that the reasoning of them is sophistical and inconclusive, the style diffuse and verbose, and the learning seemingly contained in them not drawn from the original, but picked up and purloined from French critics and translations; and particularly from Boyle, Rapin, and Thomossin, (as perhaps may be one day minutely shewn) together with the assistance which our Cudworth and Stanly happily afforded a writer confessedly ignorant of the Greek tongue, who has yet the insufferable arrogance to vilify, censure, and to think he can confute the best writers in that best language."*

These remarks are made by these gentlemen, not as professed advocates for Christianity, but as critics and scholars; and he who does not join with them in opinion, is, I think, no judge of such writings. So I hope we shall hear nothing more of the "learned and profound opinions of this noble author."

* Essay on the genius and writings of Pope.

Remarks on the Age of Reason, No. XX.

As if he had designed to render himself completely ridiculous in the eyes of all men of true discernment and taste in composition, he says, (P. 67.) "Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make," &c. Disgusting as it is to read such instances of astonishing ignorance and confidence, in a man setting himself up as a philosopher and connoisseur in all subjects, it must be highly pleasing to those who are capable of duly prizing and admiring the sacred writings, to see how well their antagonists provide against the poison of their own crude and pernicious principles.

They seem, almost to a man, to have prepared themselves for treating the Bible and its advocates with contempt, by an excessive confidence in their own talents and erudition; which, to be sure, nothing can escape.

When Bollingbroke, in a violent fit of resentment and disgust, apparently at all the world, retired to write his first philosophy, he appears to have prepossessed himself with the notion of his being not only the first genius and philosopher that had appeared; but, of a superior order of the creation. Thus fortified against the evil of diffidence, which often mars the best abilities, he set himself to erect a new fabric of philosophy and re-

ligion, whose top should reach the heaven, and transmit the fame of his talents to remotest ages. How far he has succeeded is apparent, from the respect in which his writings are now held. There is no man of science, unless through mere prejudice against Christianity, who thinks it worth while to open them, for the sake of his philosophical opinions. On the contrary, it is very pleasant to observe the estimation in which the writings of his cotemporaries, particularly Pope, Addison and Young, are still held by all men of taste, and are likely to be held long after his lordship's first philosophy will be no more read or known.

As to this author, though he appears to be much inferior in science and literature, and the knowledge of his subject, to any writer against Christianity that has fallen in my way; it is but doing him justice to acknowledge that, in confidence, indecency of remark, and rudeness of reflection on the whole Christian world, he is second to none.

With respect to that last cited, it exceeds in extravagance any that I remember to have met with: and it would be unworthy of observation, were it not to show how utterly unqualified he is to give an opinion upon the Bible, and how far those unequalled compositions are above the vain attacks of such shallow, superficial sciolists.

"The book of Job, he says, and the 19th Psalm, are theological orations conformable to the original system of theology." What he means by orations, I do not know; but it is at once obvious to the most superficial reader of it, that the greatest part of the book of Job is in the form of dialogue, which commences with the 4th chap. and properly ends with the 37th. The three first chapters are an historical introduction, and from the 7th verse of the last, an historical epilogue. The others, except a few sentences, are a descant on several parts of the visible creation, addressed to Job, as by God himself. For the 19th Psalm, which is the only one he seems to be acquainted with, the first six verses only are on the creation; the remaining eight are on subjects extremely offensive to such men; the purity, perfection, and various benefits of the written laws of God, which search the inmost heart, and require a religion not of cold, philosophic speculation, but of reverence, humility, gratitude, contrition and universal obedience. The last verse, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer!" are in a strain of piety, as far above any thing he appears to have conceived, or as could be conceived by any mere pupil of the creation, as the heavens are above the earth. I am surprized he should not have

noticed this, in his encomium of this Psalm. Had he read the book of Psalms, and judged of them as a critic, independent of religion, he might have found some others much fuller on this subject than the 19th.

Of the book of Job and this Psalm he says, "They have a great deal of elevated sentiment reverentially expressed of the power and benignity of the Almighty:" and he might have added, of his justice too, in the government of the world; his certain punishment of vain, self-confident opposers of his providence; licentious and corrupt livers; pretenders to great knowledge independent of his revealed will; and men of such veneration of their own talents and reason, as to trust them rather than the light of heavenly truth. These are the principal subjects of the book of Job.

But, effectually to counteract the poor, awkward compliment he pays that and the 19th Psalm, he adds, "but they stand on no higher rank than many other compositions on similar subjects, both before that time and since." Certainly, we ought to doubt nothing advanced by so able a judge. But, why has he not told us what compositions they are, which equal the divine books? This, as is usual with him, is mere random assertion, without the least appearance of truth, or any attempt to prove what he advances. Whatever may be

his opinion of those books, they have always been admired by men of the finest abilities and taste, and pronounced superior to all other compositions, both for their elegance and sublimity. So far are they from being equalled by any writings not under sacred character, that the ablest men who have attempted to imitate select parts of them, have, by their acknowledgments, as well as in the opinion of all competent judges, fallen far short of the originals.

Mr. Addison, in the 19th and 23d Psalms, has performed finely, and is entitled to great praise for those elegant and pious productions; but, their inferiority to the originals, is at once obvious to every discerning reader. Dr. Young's Paraphrase on the book of Job, is not inferior to any attempt of the kind; but they come not near the text itself; and that great man was sensible he never could reach its excellence.

The whole, indeed, of that book, I mean the poetical part, from the 4th to the last chapter, indicates an hand more than human, and will ever stand unrivalled by other compositions. It is equally beautiful and sublime; paints every thing to the life in description; allures us by the mercies, and awes us by the terrors of God; and, by appeals to the experience of the world, assures us of the rewards of the pious and the certain destruction of the wicked. On the last of

these subjects, there is nothing comparable to that most affecting passage, in the 20th chapter: "Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed on the earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite, but for a moment? Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach to the clouds, yet he shall perish forever. He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yea, he shall be chased away, as a vision of the night."

On the safety and peace of the righteous, there is nothing in any human composition comparable to that passage in Chapter 5: "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty; for he maketh sore and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death; and in war, from the power of the sword. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh; neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth! For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. Thou shalt come to the grave in a full age, as a shock of corn cometh in his season." The 38, 39, 40, and 41st chapters, are throughout, perfectly descriptive and charming;

and neither Homer nor Virgil have any thing that can vie with them.

The introduction of God himself in the beginning of the 38th, and his speaking to Job from the whirlwind, is extremely surprizing and awful, and the majesty and authority of his demands make one shrink into insignificance, and feel strongly apprehensive for the safety of the person addressed.

"Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; and I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if thou canst!"

The description of a war-horse going to battle is all life and fervor, and places that high-spirited generous animal full in our view, foaming, snorting, pawing the earth, and impatient to engage. "He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, ha, ha; and he smelleth, or snuffeth up the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting."

Some of the greatest poets in the world have attempted to describe this noble animal; but none of their descriptions will bear any comparison with this: and no wonder, since he who formed

the horse, knew best how to describe him. Neither have any of them any thing equal to that of the Leviathan, which is exceedingly strong and picturesque. In every thing, the power, wisdom, justice, and goodness of God are set forth in the most select and appropriate language, and with all the variety and energy of figure that can possibly be employed. The book closes with a fine representation of the condescending regard of God to pious men, and the happy result of their afflictions, in a state of prosperity and advancement, which makes ample amends for the severest sufferings. Though the book of Psalms is generally in that style which may be called the soft and tender, there are many passages in it extremely descriptive and sublime, and far before any thing of the kind to be found in compositions merely human. The following, I think, deserve a place among the finest examples of this kind.

"Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills also moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke from his nostrils, and fire from his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens and came down, and darkness was under his feet. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him was dark waters and thick clouds of the skies." Psalm 18.

"The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw

thee; they were afraid; the depths also were troubled." Ps. 77. "The sea saw it and fled; Jordan was driven back. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest; thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?" Ps. 114. These are the liveliest prosopopœias in the world, without the least harshness, or appearance of labor in the writer: and, compared with these affecting representations of the divine presence on the elements, Homer's Jupiter, with his sable brows and ambrosial curls, causing Olympus to tremble to its centre, is a mere childish, unaffecting image.

Taking the Psalms as a collection of devout exercises, expressing adoration of God, humility, contrition, gratitude for his benefits, hope and confidence in his mercy, the comforts of his favor, and miseries of his displeasure, the varieties of his providence, and the beauties of his creation, they never have been, and never can be equalled. So greatly have they been prized, that the greatest and best of men in all ages, have read and studied them with delight, consulted them as oracles, and proposed them for imitation, as the finest models. The only exceptions from these encomiums that can be made, are in favor of those pious compositions which have been dictated by the milder and more generous sentiments of the Gospel, and the clearer and more affecting

views it exhibits of futurity, and the happiness of good men after death.

As to the Proverbs, he obligingly allows that they are "an instructive table of ethics;" but, lest this concession should do them too much honor, he adds, "they are inferior in keenness to those of the Spaniards, and not more wise and economical than those of the American Franklin." Whether a proverb be keen or not, is a circumstance of no moment, provided it be just and clear. However, if he value proverbs for their keenness, I can name him at least one or two of Solomon's as sharp and cutting, I dare say, as any of the Spaniards, or any other people. "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit. Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him."

That Dr. Franklin was a great man, and great economist, there is no one doubts who is acquainted with his character: but I think it is easy to name a single chapter in the Proverbs, worth more than all he ever made, or at least that I have seen; nor do I think this opinion any disparagement to that eminent philosopher, and excellent citizen.

To which I will add, that one good maxim or precept of piety, directing us to future happiness, is of more value than all the maxims of philoso-

phers, on that poor-spirited economy which confines itself to the interests of this life.

Solomon has not only given us a great number of as good maxims and precepts of worldly prudence as ever were dictated; but the most valuable moral and religious observations, and directions suited to men of all capacities and conditions: in all which respects his book is incomparably beyond all that the greatest masters of Greece and Rome have done in the like way.

It would be easy to show, by descending to particulars, that the other books of the sacred writings, for animated and picturesque description, beauty and boldness of figures, sublimity of sentiment, and excellence of precepts of morality and piety, do yet stand, and will forever stand unrivalled by any human compositions. And, as they have been, so they always will be admired, and diligently read and studied, as containing "the words of eternal life," by all men of true learning and piety, to the end of time.

ARTEMAS.

Griesbach's Greek Testament.

Messrs. FRENEAU & PAINE,

Observing in your Gazette of the 30th ult. an account of Griesbach's second edition of the Greek Testament, I thought it might be agreeable to such of your readers as are fond of sacred literature, and wish to promote it in this country, to have some additional information with respect to that important work.

Dr. John James Griesbach published at Halle, the first volume of his Critical Greek Testament, in 8vo. in 1775, and the second volume in 1777. The editor has the character of possessing, in an eminent degree, all the qualifications requisite for such a work—profound skill in languages and the rules of just criticism, joined to great industry, candour, and integrity. His first edition has been principally used by the students, in most of the German universities; and the late celebrated Michaelis professor in the university of Gottingen, says, "it is a work with which no professor can dispense."

Herbet Marsh, B. D. fellow of St. John's college, Cambridge, a very competent judge in biblical learning, speaks of it in the most favorable terms. "The alterations which have been made by Griesbach are clear and decisive: they are founded on authorities which cannot be rejected." In another place—"Griesbach has admired critical conjecture in no instance whatsoever; and wherever he has expunged, corrected, or added, the evidence, (which he has accurately produced) is, in point of authority, three and four-fold in his favor." He says again—"The value of Griesbach's edition is so decided, that it would be superfluous to expatiate on its merits. It was not the object of Griesbach to form a complete collection of all the various readings which have been produced by Mill, Bengel, and Wetstein, and to add the numerous extracts which he had made himself, but to give only a select and choice collection, omitting all such as were either trifling in themselves, and supported by little authority, or were evident corrections, errata, or interpolations."*

These remarks are made on the 1st edition. With respect to the present, it appears that in preparing it for the press, the editor has made extracts from 200 manuscripts, in addition to those used for the 1st; and has, from first to last, accurately

* Notes on Michaelis.

collated not less than 17 different copies of the Latin version. Marsh supposes that in this edition, which was in the press, when he published Michaelis, in 1793, all the manuscripts, of the Greek Testament, which have been wholly or partially collected amounting to 469, are quoted; which cannot fail of being highly satisfactory to those who wish to know the authorities on which his text and various readings are founded.

It may be proper to mention also, that in 1785 he printed the 1st volume of his "*Symbolae Criticæ, ad suplendas et corrigendas variarum, N. T. lectionum collectiones:*" A work which Michaelis says is necessary for every man who uses his Greek Testament.

From these circumstances then, it is very probable that this edition is superior to any that has yet been published; and must be an invaluable acquisition to every man capable of profiting by it, and who wishes to have the most accurate knowledge attainable of that divine book. And as in this country, from various causes, we are as yet but in our infancy, as to biblical literature, it is highly desirable that we should be furnished with all attainable means of advancing in this branch of knowledge, in some proportion to our progress in others of much less importance. The clergy in particular, whose profession immediately engages them to a critical study of the Greek Testament, are

concerned in publications of this nature; and every public library, and especially every public seminary of learning, ought, to be furnished with at least a copy either of Griesbach's or some other critical edition, several of which have been published in Germany, within 10 or 12 years past; and of which a particular account may be seen in Michaelis' " Introduction to the N. T." with Marsh's notes.

While France, with great success, is pushing forward the fine arts, and experimental philosophy; Germany, Denmark and Russia, are vigorously engaged in advancing sacred literature: and if I should say that Germany, by its numerous and pre-eminent productions of this kind, stands on an higher step of honor than any other nation, I think the assertion might be made good in detail. I will venture to add, without in the least intending to depreciate the merits of the profane Classics, that such a work as Griesbach's would be a greater ornament to the library of any gentleman of liberal learning, and of any profession, than the most splended edition of the Eneid, Iliad, or any other production, of Heathen antiquity.* And if, while we are running roads, cutting canals, building bridges, clearing water-falls, and rapidly ad-

* The elegant and philosophical Le Pluche, being requested by a young officer in the French army to recommend to him a list of books proper for one in his situation, put down only—Euclid's Elements Cæsar's Commentaries, and the Greek Testament.

vancing in several branches of useful and ornamental science, we should enrich our country with the best productions of Europe, in biblical learning, we should, I think, do it a service, of at least equal importance with any of the others.

I am, gentlemen, respectfully, your's

SYLVESTER.

ESSAY ON THE EXCELLENCY

AND

ADVANTAGES OF THE GOSPEL.

That the Gospel contained in the Old, and more explicitly in the New Testament, is of infinite importance to mankind, is a truth which may be inferred from the conduct both of its friends and its enemies.

The former receive it with the reverence which they suppose to be due to a divine revelation, embrace its doctrines as the firm principles of their faith, form their manners after the example of its Author, and the requisitions of his word; and venture the hope of their salvation on the validity of its truth. The zeal of the latter in opposing it, while at the same time they acknowledge the excellency of its morals, admit the majesty of the style in which its instructions are conveyed, and confess even its utility in preventing the disorders of society, correcting, or at least, restraining the vices of the licentious, and guiding many into the paths of usefulness and virtue, is a strong testimony of its superior advantages to mankind. It

is my intention in this essay, to lay before my readers, such specimens of the excellency and utility of the Gospel, as must confirm its importance to mankind; and I think, present it in a view that will evince it to be worthy of all acceptation.

I. The Gospel presents the most sublime objects to the mind, and opens the widest field for pure and exalted contemplation.

We shall not here insist on the views which are given of God himself, in the Holy Scriptures, which are undoubtedly very far superior to any which natural reason ever gave, or could give of the divine nature; but take into consideration only such ideas as are peculiar to the revelation itself.

1st. The union of the divine with the human nature, in the person of the Messiah, is a truth the most astonishing that can be conceived of; and of which natural reason never formed the most distant conception. The thing itself is indeed altogether beyond our comprehension; though the fact is beyond all reasonable doubt.

It is a very sublime idea which Moses gives us in a few plain words; and God said "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness—so God made man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." But how extremely wonderful are the following thoughts; "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"—"Who be-

ing in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." The greatness of this thought entirely confounds our reason, but is easily apprehended by faith, and becomes the ground of our sublimest hopes.

2d. The atonement of the sins of men, by the sufferings of the human nature, in union with the Deity, is another truth which runs through the whole of the word of God, and seems to be the first and leading principle of the Gospel. This expedient of divine wisdom for saving mankind, is so different from every thing which human reason would have thought of; so perfectly honorable for the government of God, and so safe for the penitent sinner, that it perfectly comes up to every view in which satisfaction for sin could be necessary, and is found by long experience, to be the only consideration that can give peace and tranquility to an awakened and self-condemning conscience.

This exhibits at one and the same time, the exceeding love of God to the world, and the most disinterested and generous affection of the Savior who suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

There is certainly no consideration so powerful to raise our gratitude and love, to reduce our soul to an humble and obedient temper, and pro-

duce a warm, active and diffusive love to mankind. "Scarcely for a righteous man would one die, yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The sentiment is most noble in itself, and most powerful in its effects.

3d. The union of all the faithful with Jesus Christ, and by virtue of it, with one another, is also an idea of the most endearing and sublime nature. I am the vine, saith our Lord to his disciples, and ye are the branches. This implies several beautiful and most interesting ideas—that they derived their life and being from him—that they depend on him for the continuance of it—that their connexion with him, is very intimate—and that lopped or severed from him, they not only fail of fruit, but must inevitably wither and die. The same idea is represented by the Apostle, by another beautiful and charming allusion.—He compares the whole church to the human body—all the members of which, are connected with one another by various joints and ligaments, having their respective uses with regard to the whole—and such a common sympathy, that "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it,"—and that the whole, and each particular part, is nourished by the head, and under

its direction—and that the head is Christ. To this I may add, that the holy angels are also represented as making a part of that great spiritual body over which Christ presides and rules—and bearing some special relation by affection and services to the church, redeemed with his blood. Such another community in intimacy, happiness and honor, does not exist, that we know of, in the universe. Nor is there any subject within the compass of our knowledge, that affords larger scope for agreeable reflection; or more effectual motives to love and obedience to Christ—and a vigorous affection to all his members, as well as concern for their common prosperity and honor.

4th. The next and last thing I shall take notice of under this head, is—the doctrine of an universal resurrection from the dead, and the reunion of the body and soul, for an immortal duration. There is something naturally affecting in the idea of the dissolution of the body—of its being reduced to a state of entire corruption, and blended with the common mass of the elements.

And I cannot but think, that the view of this event must often have excited very gloomy and disconsolate thoughts in the minds of the wise and reflecting among the heathen. Yet it does not appear that any of them ever formed the least idea of a resurrection. So far from this, that when Paul preached at Athens, before the most grave

and learned body of men, at that time among the heathens, on introducing this subject, they seemed to suppose he spoke of some new deity which he wished to recommend to them. However, it appeared so entirely absurd and impossible to them, that they treated it with great contempt, and hastily broke up. Thus, by a fatal mistake common to all who reject Christianity, that nothing is to be believed that cannot be comprehended by reason, they lost perhaps the only opportunity they ever had of being instructed in a doctrine the most agreeable to our desires. For certainly the idea of the restitution of the body from the ruins of mortality, to a state of perfect health, activity and vigor, and capable of accommodating itself to the spiritual exercises and happiness of the soul, is of all things the most desirable, and makes ample compensation for all that can be endured in this life, as the punishment of the fall. So natural is this desire of immortality, that men in every age have contrived some expedient to gratify it. The practice of embalming the body to preserve it from putrefaction, the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul, from one body to another, and the erection of monuments to preserve a sort of imaginary existence, are so many expressions of it.

These expedients how natural soever, are yet very unsatisfactory, and leave us whelmed in the gloom of uncertainty. But by a few unquestionable

facts in the history of the Gospel, this gloom is effectually dispelled, and the soul by faith, looks forward to the period when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, when this mortal shall put on immortality, and when death shall be forever swallowed up in victory."

The subjects we have now touched upon, are peculiar to the revelation, give us the most amiable views of the divine character, and by their sublimity, serve to elevate the soul above the transient concerns of mortality, and give it a firmness and dignity under afflictions, which neither reason nor philosophy are capable of affording. And it is a peculiarity in these excellent subjects, that they are equally accommodated to all capacities and conditions of men. While other subjects of a much inferior rank, require either a particular cast and strength of genius, or long application, or both of them united, in order even to a moderate proficiency, these are as attainable by the plain and unlettered Christian, as the speculative and laborious philosopher. Not being in the order of natural things, they lie not within the laws of any science, nor to be understood by any chain of reasoning—but a simple act of faith in them, as doctrines of divine revelation, give them as certain a reality to the mind, as any objects of the bodily senses. It is but a very small part of mankind that are capable, either by genius, or condition of

life, of enjoying the pleasures, or being improved by the refinements of science. And even when both genius and condition concur to afford the most desirable advantages, what time and toil of application are requisite to attain even a few ideas, and these too within the range of visible things. But. as to the sublime truths of the Gospel, the plain peasant, the mechanic, the day-laborer, and the slave, without the toil of reasoning, and the perplexity of conjecture, and in the midst of his daily occupation, conceives of them, with clearness and delight, and feels them at once the motives to his duty, and the source of his consolation.

II. It is by the Gospel or revelation alone, that we are furnished with an authentic and satisfactory account of the first state of human nature, by what means it became depraved, and what is the true source of all the errors and miseries of mankind.

Reason and philosophy have always in vain, attempted to answer these enquiries. The conjectures of the most sensible of the heathen moralists concerning them, were always weak and perplexed, and often exceedingly absurd.

But, in a few passages, in the book of Genesis. Moses hath given us as full and satisfactory an account of these subjects, as is necessary to be known—To the principal circumstance of which, I mean Adam's representation of his posterity, and

the effects of his first transgression on the whole human race, the Apostle Paul hath given his explicit testimony, in the 5th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. This account it is at present unnecessary to repeat. It need only to be remarked, that to the first transgression, voluntarily made, against a plain and solemn prohibition of God, the Scripture hath ascribed the errors of the understanding, the disorder of the passions, and all the varied miseries that have fallen upon the human race—so evil and bitter a thing is it to forsake God. The importance of this account in the sacred history, amounts to this---that it clears the divine character of all suspicion of a defect in goodness or justice, and fixes the cause of all the evils of human life, in the voluntary depravity of the human heart; it tends to humble man as the author of his own misery, and of all the disorders of the world—and it illustrates the exceeding goodness of God, in providing a method of recovery from sin, and all the lamentable effects it hath produced in the visible creation.

Till these things be certainly known, man can have no just ideas of himself; can find no certain relief from his present sufferings; nor form suitable apprehensions of that God with whom he has to do—All is perplexity and conjecture: but the moment he understands the account, which revelation hath given him of these subjects, he is freed

from all reasonable embarrassment; and as soon as he understands the cause of his misery, he sees the method of his recovery and happiness. "O, the depth of the riches both of the knowledge and goodness of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

III. It is the Gospel alone that proposeth effectual means for correcting the errors of the human heart, rectifying the disorders of society, and abating the afflictions and miseries that have fallen upon man. In every age, men of reflection and humanity have been affected with the view of the disorder and miseries of the world; and various expedients have been contrived and proposed for removing or abating them. Much hath been said of philosophy, of temperance, of education, and good civil policy; but how far any, or all of these have been able to go towards the proposed end, every man acquainted with the history of the world, must be well-informed. The utmost that these remedies could propose, even when most successfully employed, was to regulate the manners of mankind, and a little to check the overflowings of vice and misery; while the sourse of the evils remained in its native state, defying the force of moral principles and political regulations. Nothing indeed can ever be available to any effectual change or reformation of mankind, that has not power to reach the conscience itself, and regulate

the moral principle, by motives drawn from divine authority. But human principles and institutions cannot in any case be accompanied and enforced by motives of this sort: this effect is the prerogative of God alone, who only trieth the reins and searcheth the heart, and has the power of controuling and directing its operations.

The efficacy of the Gospel to the above-mentioned ends, arises from the following circumstances—

1. It contains a complete system of moral duties, explained in all their varieties, and accommodated to all capacities.

2. It enforces every moral precept, by motives the best adapted to affect the heart and conscience —motives which not only concern the present interests of men, but their immortal duration.

3. It proposeth the only means by which moral precepts and motives can effectually reach the heart, and have a controling power and influence over it.——These three considerations comprehend the whole, and the only means on which both the reformation and happiness of mankind depend.

1. The first step towards our recovery, is the knowledge of our duty. On this point, whatever has been said of the sufficiency of human reason, it never has been capable, since the first transgression, of discovering the extent of moral obligation. Independent of revelation, in the highest state of

improvement, its sentiments and reasoning are not only very short of the truth, but in the most necessary cases, quite contrary to it. This truth is very strongly expressed in the words of the Apostle—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God—he neither submits to them, nor understands them, because they are foolishness to him—neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"—But this lamentable defect in human reason, is abundantly supplied by the written truths of revelation. Whatever relates to our conduct towards God; towards Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men; towards our fellow-creatures, in the social relations, and our own happiness as individuals, is so clearly pointed out, that an honest and teachable person, intent on knowing his duty, may, with the smallest improvements and capacity, acquire a sufficient knowledge of every thing necessary, to a sober, righteous, and godly life here, and to eternal happiness hereafter. And it is a remarkable excellency of the moral precepts of the Gospel, that three or four short sentences, retainable by the weakest memory, comprehend the substance of our duties; every particular case of which, may be easily deduced and applied to practice, where there is a good conscience, which is generally the best interpreter of the divine commands.

2. To fix our attention to its precepts, and to make them effectual for our direction, the Gospel has urged and enforced them upon us, by the most rational and interesting motives. The two great springs of human action are desire and fear; both of them acting to the same end, our happiness: the one directly pursuing it, the other guarding against its contrary. Now these two passions are addressed in the Gospel, by the highest and strongest motives that the mind can possibly feel or conceive of; and such as never were, or could be known but by revelation. On the one side are placed exceeding great and precious promises, including every thing desirable, and accommodated to every condition. The amount of these is—the pardon of sin; the special protection of Christ, and the direction of his spirit; assistance in our trials and conflicts with our spiritual enemies; support in afflictions, together with the sanctified use of them; and finally, the assurance of whatever God shall see necessary for us; and in due time, a reward of complete and eternal blessedness. The particular advantages of these promises is, that while they hold out to us the greatest possible benefits, they can be implicitly relied on, with a perfect assurance of their liberal accomplishment, because they are the promises of a God who cannot lie. Nor is it any defect in the plan of Christianity, nor any discouragement to its true disciples,

that it contains no special promises of mere worldly advantages, because these always disappoint us in possession; but by holding to us distant objects of certain acquisition, that will completely satisfy us, our hopes and desires are kept continually alive, and the springs of action so much the more vigorous, as the things which God hath laid up for them that serve him, are such as the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart to conceive of it.

On the other hand the threatnings of the Gospel are also the most affecting that can be conceived of. They do not indeed alarm with the apprehension of worldly calamities, but they are so much the more dreadful, as they awaken our fears of a misery that we can form no distinct idea of, but of which we are certain, that it will be complete and everlasting. And it heightens their awful import, that the misery they hold out, is described by a variety of things the most terrible to our senses and imagination—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; to be cut asunder, and cast into utter darkness; by the gnawing of a worm that never dies, and the burning of fire that is never quenched; by being cast into a furnace of fire; and finally, into a lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death; all which undoubtedly means an extreme and everlasting misery. Nor are these threats denounced only against

gross and flagitious sinners, but against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men—against the want of faith in Christ, as well as persecution or blasphemy. "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Intemperate anger, malice, envy, pride, and all evil thoughts and desires, as well as unrighteous and cruel actions, equally fall under the threatnings of the Gospel. And certainly, if the most secret purpose and desire of evil is forbidden and guarded against by such alarming considerations, it is the best possible security against the corrupt and vicious propensities of mankind. Where these things are soberly realized, and suffered to have their due weight, there is no man who can give himself up to deliberate sins, either against his own happiness, or that of others—"My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments." But, to make these motives effectual, and to complete the means of our reformation and happiness, there is one thing yet remains, without which, neither the precepts, nor promises, nor threatnings of revelation, will be sufficient. I mean,

3. The method that the Gospel has provided for giving efficacy to its doctrines and precepts, as well as to reach and regulate the heart as the outward conduct, it will easily be understood that this can be no other than the power and operation of the Divine Spirit. The indispensible necessity of such

a power and operation, will be denied or disputed by those only, who have not considered that it is as much out of the order of nature, for a man dead in tresspasses and sins, to recover himself to a spiritual life, as for a dead body to quicken itself to animal motion and enjoyment. If the spiritual nature and designs of the truths of the Gospel, cannot be effectually understood without the special illumination of the Divine Spirit, much more cannot the corruption and stubbornness of the heart be purified and subdued—Because the heart is much more difficult to be affected and reformed, than the understanding is to be enlightened. That "it is God alone who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure," and that we are washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God; and that these ends can be effected only by the extraordinary influence of the spirit, through the Gospel, is as evident from fact, as from the declarations of Scripture: and this fact seems sufficient to prove it, viz. That men who have been long abandoned to the most vicious principles and conduct, against the force of the clearest knowledge and most careful education, have without any visible means, or at least of an extraordinary kind, been suddenly changed, and resolutely fixed in the most virtuous and pious course of life. To this it is of importance to add, that every man who has been changed

"from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God"—always ascribes his reformation to its proper cause, the Divine Power.

This doctrine then, being established, we have in the Gospel, a certain and effectual principle, for beginning and completing, in the soul, every thing necessary for his own private conduct and happiness, and for his sustaining all the relations of the social life, with benefit to others. This principle or power, enlarges self-love to benevolence, and compassion, and charity—it subdues and regulates the passions, establishes the love of truth and justice, and directs the designs and course of life, by the dictates and authority of conscience, under the influence of the love and fear of God. In short, in the same degree, as the Gospel produces its proper effects in mankind, it refines and exalts the affections, and regulates the manners, with a propriety and dignity, which neither reason nor education, nor a sense of decency and honor, are capable of producing "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever honest." To this we may add, that it has produced more illustrious and useful men, the ornaments and blessings of society, in one single age and nation, than education and philosophy alone, have done in all nations and ages of the world together. It is still farther to be remarked, that under the influence that the establishment and profession of it in nations,

has had over mankind, it has contributed more to enlarge their minds and polish their manners, when it has even gone no farther, than any other institution that the world has ever seen. Whole nations, from the grossest idolatry, from studied and customary barbarity, from a state in several respects, little superior to that of brutes, and in some worse, have been gradually recovered to a rational worship, to humanity, and gentleness of manners, altogether, by the force of those truths and regulations which Christianity introduced among them.

It were very easy to support these observations, by abundant examples drawn from the history of the Church; but it is sufficient for the design of this essay, just to hint at the more important truths that evidence the excellency of the Gospel, and the doctrine we are now upon, is, undoubtedly, its principal glory, and that which most of all shews its necessity, and should most recommend it to our faith and acceptance. If it clearly discovers to us, the will of God, respecting every part of our conduct—if it holds out to us the strongest and most solemn motives to faith in Christ, to obedience to his laws, to trust in his power and faithfulness, to perseverance in the profession of the Gospel, if it has power to extend to our corruptions, to regulate our passions, to exalt our views, to support us in afflictions—if it produces love, patience, humility, and a readiness

to every office of good will and charity to men—if it insures the safety of the soul now, by virtue of union with Christ, as members of his body, under his special care and protection, and gradually trains it up in holiness and the image of God—if with all these, it offers complete deliverence from the miseries of the fall, and if it will assuredly conduct to complete and eternal happiness, every faithful and obedient subject of it, then certainly, it is the wisdom, and the power of God—the most perfect dispensation of his providence, and worthy of all acceptation, and immortal praise. We may then justly say, "All the Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, making the man of God perfect and thoroughly furnished unto good works."

IV. It is another singular benefit of the Gospel, that it breaks and reduces the power of evil spirits over the world. The influence of these beings, though not sufficiently attended to, because not observable by our senses, is undoubtedly very great, and has been constantly so, since the first transgression of man. That they darken and perplex the understanding, in its judgment of divine truth, corrupt the affections, excite false and delusive apprehensions of the advantages of the world, raise prejudices against the laws and government of God, or tempt men entirely to doubt of it, or

disbelieve it, and that they endeavor by various suggestions and impressions, to invalidate the evidence and authority of the Gospel, to oppose its progress, and so to prevent men from being saved by it, are things that seem beyond all doubt. Their art and subtility in addressing temptations, may well be judged of, from the case of our first parents, and that of our Lord himself. And though the circumstance of these temptations were quite singular, yet the Apostle has very strongly intimated that their influence, by whatever means exerted, is very powerful in opposing Christ, and contending with those who are engaged in promoting it, and endeavoring to obtain its benefits. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, (alone) but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," and therefore it is necessary that every Christian should take to himself the whole armour of God, that he may be able to stand " in the arduous conflict. To place this malignant influence in a still stronger view, the Apostle represents those who oppose the truth of the Gospel, as entangled or caught in the snare of the Devil, and so taken captive by him, at his will." We may judge farther of their power and malice, by the visible effects of them, in corrupting the worship of God, and drawing off men to acknowledge them as the oracles of wis-

dom, and the heads and rulers of the visible world. The most remarkable cases of their artifices and success in this view, are the establishment of idolatry, the case of witchcraft, the auguries, divinations and oracles of the heathen; and the superstitious and heretical opinions of Christian churches.

Nothing can be more directly opposed to the authority and honor of God, nor more ruinous to men, than paying religious homage to his creatures, whether intended as representatives of him, or in regard of their usefulness to us. And yet, at the time of the coming of Christ, so universal was idolatry, that except the small remains of the Jews that adhered to the worship of the law, the whole world had fallen into it, having "turned the glory of God into a lie." So excessively gross too was this homage in many instances, that not only evil spirits, but some of the lowest and vilest parts of the creation were made the objects of it. So far had the spirit that ruleth in the children of disobedience, darkened the minds of men, and reduced them to the meanest subjection to his dictates.

In the same view of corrupting and destroying them, the devil had found means to make them believe he had a knowledge of futurity, and would reveal events, and discover secret things to those who applied to him, and invoked him for this purpose.

This opinion gave rise to witchcraft, divinations and oracles; and so popular were these delusions, that except the Jews, to whom they were forbidden by an express law of God, all nations usually resorted to them, as the certain means of discovering things which could not be known in the ordinary course of nature; and this was a principal part of their religion. For this purpose they repaired to dark and retired places, to dens and caverns, and dreary solitudes, where they supposed these invisible spirits were always present; and in these places, with strange and mysterious rites, with shrieks and lamentations, tearing their hair, beating and wounding their bodies, they waited for an answer to their invocations. In other cases, they raised temples and altars, where they offered sacrafice, and had persons particularly set apart, as priests or priestesses, to consult the power they worshipped, and give answers to those who came to them for that purpose. Under this infatuation, there is no doubt, that frequently they were really possessed by the devil, and uttered things which could be the effect only of some extraordinary impression. One instance out of many that might be brought shall suffice to show, how far evil spirits have been permitted to exercise their power and malice in this respect--While Paul and Silas were at Philippi, the metropolis of Macedonia, a young woman, possessed with a spirit of divination, follow-

ed them for several days, crying out, " these men are the servants of the most high God," &c. The case is expressly mentioned as a real *possession*, and the artifice of the evil spirit was, to make the Apostles suspected of acting in confederacy with itself; at length Paul, to prevent the success of this design, commanded it immediately to go out of the young woman—it left her the same hour, and from that time she ceased to utter divinations, which cost the Apostles a severe scourging and confinement in prison.

Nor was the influence of these spirits in corrupting and infatuating the minds of men confined to the heathen. The apostle informs Timothy, that the spirit had expressly uttered that " in the latter times, men should depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and the doctrines of devils." And so it turned out—They endeavored to pervert the minds of Christians from the simplicity of the Gospel, by introducing among them the popular doctrine of the heathen, respecting the souls of departed men, who had become a sort of inferior deities, and so entitled to religious worship, in consideration of services they were supposed to perform to the living. And this doctrine obtained such a footing, that to this day it remains in a considerable part of the Christian Church, to the dishonor and offence of the truth, and great danger to the souls of men.

To the same influence is to be ascribed the licentious opinions which have been grafted on the doctrine of grace; and the various superstitious rites and supernumerary doctrines, which have been introduced in addition to the institutions and commands of Christ, by which men have been led to trust to these inventions, rather than the simplicity of divine wisdom.

These are the principal and more important cases of diabolical influence. Others might have been added; such as their power over the elements, in raising storms and other commotions in nature; terrifying the imaginations of men, with frightful images, and driving them to madness; afflicting their bodies with terrible diseases, beyond the power of medicine; and agitating and convulsing them, by immediate and actual possession. The instances of their power in these respects, recorded in the Gospel, furnish us with an alarming view of their capacity and eagerness to make us miserable. In fine, they are exceedingly sagacious and artful; their power is irresistible; their numbers are innumerable; and they probably surround our earth in the confines of the air; so that we live as it were within the lines of these formidable enemies, who but for the mediation of Jesus Christ and his special protection of us, would soon destroy us in the ruins of our habitations, and whelm us in the same abyss of misery

with themselves. Now, the Gospel is our only defence against their power and malice. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; to counteract his subtlety and power, and rescue the world from his tyrannical usurpation; and this he has done in a remarkable degree.

Whether it be true or not, that all the oracles of the heathen became dumb at his birth, as history has recorded, we cannot determine, but we certainly know, that soon after the preaching of the Gospel, they gradually fell into disrepute and neglect; so that in a century or two there was hardly one of note to be found in the whole Roman empire, which at that time included the greatest part of Europe, and a large portion both of Africa and Asia. The same fate, in a great measure, attended their incantations, auguries and divinations. As to witchcraft, which is much the same with the others, though the opinion of its reality has continued much the longest; yet it is so generally discredited in the Christian church, that what opinion does remain of it, is seldom productive of any serious consequence. As to the power of the devil to tempt and seduce men into sin, that still remains, and probably will remain till the consummation of things. But even his influence in this respect is much abated, if we may judge from this circumstance—that the more violent and outrageous crimes, which strike at the very root of society,

are much less frequent than formerly; and gradually abate in all nations, as the pure light of the Gospel spreads and prevails. Here too the provision of the Gospel is our best security. By its truths and precepts it provides against dangerous errors in religious opinions. By its motives, it provides against errors of the heart and conduct; and by the special aids of the Holy Spirit, in enforcing and applying these to the conscience, as well as its secret influence in subduing, in purifying, and regulating the whole man; by this armour of God, we are defended on every side, against the bane and deadly wounds of the empoisoned arrows of the enemy; so that he who takes to himself this armour, shall be able to stand; and through the sharpest and severest conflicts, make his way good, beyond the reach of the power and malice of the wicked one. How excellent then is that grace, which insures so great a deliverance!

We proceed to the last article to be now mentioned, for the illustration of our subject, and this is,

V. That it is the Gospel alone that has informed us of the general reformation of the world; of the catastrophe of the earth we inhabit; of a general judgment both of men and angels, and the final state of mankind.

That the Gospel has already been preached in almost every part of the world, except the interior parts of Tartary, and perhaps of Africa, in the

western parts of America, and the lately discovered Islands of the Southern Ocean, is evident from history. And indeed, it seems probable this was nearly done as early as the destruction of Jerusalem. That it shall, at some future time, be preached, and received, in every nation upon earth, may be strongly inferred from the design of it, and seems expressly mentioned in different prophecies of the New Testament. But, that it intimates that there will ever be a time, when every man shall be a true Christian, is not, I think, clear from any passage, nor even very highly probable. Neither is the opinion of the Millenium, or personal reign of Christ upon earth, for a thousand years, as literally understood by many, at all certain, or even supported by arguments of very strong probability. The amount of those words seems to intend no more, than that there will be a time of the extraordinary power of the Gospel. Although there are not wanting arguments in favor of the opinion, that the time mentioned in the revelation, is already past.

If righteousness and truth shall generally prevail, if superstition, persecution, and usurpation, shall cease among Christians—if destructive animosities, and wars, shall give way to universal peace, it will be a time highly glorious, and the kingdom of God will come with great power, the earth shall be filled with gladness. This, we

are undoubtedly to look for. But, whether there will be a proportionable change in the state of the natural world, whether the disorder of the elements so formidable to man, shall cease or be abated, whether the pains and diseases of the human body, that so much depend on the elements, shall also be removed—and whether the whole frame of nature shall be restored to its original state, though not certainly decided in the affirmative yet, seem something probable. This perhaps may, in part, be intended by the "restoration of all things"—by the creation being delivered from the bondage of corruption; and by the "new heavens, and new earth," spoken of by the Apostle Paul. But, however this may be, we are expressly informed that the earth, and the works of it, shall be burnt up—that it is reserved for fire; and that the elements shall melt with fervent heat." But, as fire does not destroy, but only change and break the connection of the elements, the conflagration may only serve to change the present state of the earth, and prepare a purer matter for another, in which "there shall be no more curse."

We now leave these conjectures, and come to an awful certainty, which shall conclude the present state of things. I mean the last judgment, and the final decision of the character and condition of every man. We are expressly told that

God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by Jesus Christ, that every thought and work of man will be brought into judgment, and that every man shall receive, according to that which he hath done in the body, whether it be good or bad.

But, as we neither know the time when the event is to happen, nor the formalities that are to attend it, nor in what part of the universe it is to take place, and as the knowledge of these circumstances would be of no importance to us, we shall wave all conjectures respecting them. It is enough for us to know, that it will be perfectly solemn and interesting—that Jesus Christ is constituted Judge of the solemnity—that the whole human race will be assembled before him——that he will pronounce on every man a sentence agreeable to his true character, at the time of finishing his state of trial; and will adjudge, and unalterably fix his everlasting condition, according as he shall be found to have acted his part in this life. The wicked shall go, according to his own words, into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.

These words, whatever adventurous men may suggest to the contrary, do certainly, as far as language can be depended on, determine, that, as the happiness of the righteous will, from that time, be unchangeably fixed—so also will the misery of

the wicked, and it is nothing less than infatuation, to hope, that the mercy of God will interpose, and release the damned, after a particular period of suffering; and either immediately give them a place in heaven, or put them into a second state of trial. Besides that, the Scripture has given, I think, no intimation of such an act of mercy, and the mediation of Christ does not seem provided to extend farther than this state of trial—a state of complete misery and wickedness is no preparation for happiness; and, supposing a second state of trial, a third also might be necessary---and so, on that principle, there might be an eternal alternation of trials and sufferings, which would be little better than constant misery; and indeed the supposition is attended with insupportable difficulties and objections, in every view.

It will no doubt be a circumstance of additional solemnity to the last judgment, that the fallen angels will then also appear, and receive their final condemnation---for we are told that they are reserved in chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day. The importance of these accounts in the Holy Scriptures, is very great. The certainty of the universal prevalence, and influence of the Gospel, serves to confirm our faith in the truth, and divine original of those oracles, as nothing would seem more improbable to mere reason, and also in the power and faithfulness of Jesus

Christ, who has founded his church upon a rock, and declared that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. The final catastrophe of the world could also be foretold only by the eternal spirit; this too aids our faith in the Gospel, and shows us the necessity of seeking an habitation that shall continue after this shall be no longer found.

The prediction of the last judgment is not only a strong testimony to the authenticity of the Gospel, but, has a direct tendency to produce, in us, the greatest diligence and carefulness, in the management of our hearts and lives; and to secure a special interest in the atonement, and care of Jesus Christ, by whom we are to be judged; that we may be able to appear before him, with confidence and joy; be openly acknowledged and approved by him, and finally, by his sentence, be adjudged to "enter into his rest," that we may "be with him where he is to behold his glory." If the view of such an event be not sufficient to determine us to live a sober, righteous, and godly life, and to direct all our designs, so as to prepare us for it, there is nothing that we know of in the compass of reason, or revelation, that can be sufficient for the purpose.

In the review of what has been said on our subject, the amount is this—The Gospel sets before us the most sublime ideas and prospects that can enter into the mind of man—it points out to us, in the clearest and most intelligible terms, every

part of our duty, it is a lamp to our feet, and it urges and enforces our duty, by the most rational and affecting motives—it proposes a certain and effectual method of applying these motives to the heart and conscience, it encourageth us by its promises, and alarms us by its threatenings—and finally, by discovering to us the great events that are to conclude the present state of things, it has done every thing for us, that the wisdom of God hath seen necessary and proper, as the means of our recovery, and certainly, infinitely better than created wisdom could have devised.

1. If the preceding account of the importance of the Gospel be true, then infidelity is most unreasonable and pernicious. It is unreasonable because it rejects that which it cannot prove untrue, that which, suppose it to be as defective and spurious as unbelievers would intimate, it does not propose any thing to supply its defects, nor capable of doing what it has done towards the reformation of the world.

It is pernicious because it would deprive us of the only solid consolation we have as sinners—of the only thing that can heal the wounded conscience—can support us in our weaknesses and sorrows, and give us a satisfactory and steadfast hope of a better life. Infidelity itself proves the Gospel to be true, because the Gospel foretold the very treatment it has met with from the advocates

of natural reason, and the opposers of the sovereignty of divine grace. But, not to dispute with men, on whom we can have no hold, because there is no first principle in which we both agree, we will demand of them, only one thing; which, if they can make good, our dispute with them will end. Let them produce us, from the vast catalogue of unbelievers, the same bright examples of virtue and piety—the same examples of humility and patience, of heroic fortitude and disinterestedness—of zeal for the glory of God, and the happiness of men. Let them produce us such men as Watts and Doddridge, as Addison and Newton, as Locke and Boyle—as many of the Fathers of the primitive Church, and above all as the Apostles—and let them show us a religion founded by such a person as Jesus Christ. Let them do these things, and we will become the proselytes to their system, and cast in our lot with them.

When men set up human reason as the supreme umpire of truth, let them consider, that supposing it to be such, we have even on this ground, incomparably the advantage of them; since the greatest masters of reason that the world has ever seen, have received the Gospel, and trusted in that alone, to guide them through the mazes of this world, to the kingdom of light.

I must confess it is a very pleasing thought, that if we are deceived, as to the Christian system,

we have the satisfaction of thinking, that we are in company with the wisest, and the best of mankind. Supposing it even doubtful whether Christianity were true or not, we can be no losers by believing and adhering to it: for if it were even possible we should be at last deceived, and find it to be altogether a fiction, the deception will be such, that we shall have no reason to be ashamed of it; since the reason of mankind in its highest and most improved state, has not been able to find any thing better, any thing equal, any thing comparable to it. I will add on this article only one thing more, and that is, that on the ground of infidelity itself, we have vastly the advantage of those who reject the Gospel; for we also take human reason for our guide, as far as it can possibly go; and where it stops, we take revelation to supply its defects. If reason then should fail us at last, we have revelation; and if revelation should be unnecessary, we shall have all that reason can do for us; so that we have a double security for being both right and safe: whereas those who reject the Gospel, and trust to reason alone, if that should fail them, they are undone, because they have no resource left. This being their real situation, we would affectionately invite them, to enter the course with us, and take the wisdom of God, though foolishness in the eyes of too many in the world, to be their guide, their confidence, and joy; and they may rest assured,

that it will neither mislead, nor disappoint them, but will crown their faith and adherence to Christ, with a part in that kingdom which shall not be moved.

2. If the Gospel be of such importance to all the interests of mankind, as we have attempted to illustrate, then it is the duty of those who believe it to be such, to use all proper and convenient measures, to encourage and promote it. And this may be done in so many different ways, that every Christian has it in his power to contribute something towards it. His instructions, his exhortations, his example, are all suited to do something; and much more perhaps, than we are aware of. Every one is bound to use his personal influence in private life, as far as it will extend—and in the same degree as individuals maintain a conduct agreeable to the Gospel, they serve to recommend, to honor, and to extend it. It is their duty also to encourage and aid those who profess it; and especially those whose conduct is remarkably suitable to their profession. Our religion binds and obligeth us to shew benevolence to all men, but especially to the household of faith. When any are in want, we are to contribute something to their support, if we have ability; if they are in mistakes we should rectify them; if discouraged we should support and animate them; if careless we should rouse them; and if in afflictions we should com-

fort them—"Whosoever shall give to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water, only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." There are other means also in which almost every one may bear a part. The printing and publishing of useful books, especially on practical religion, and recommending and dispersing them, are means of direct and singular influence, and in all ages have been an excellent defence against the attacks of infidelity, and the stratagems of the devil. To these I may add, that the association of Christians for encouraging one another, and their encouragement and aid to those who are engaged in publishing and defending the Gospel, or who have that important office in their view, are means highly approvable, and have been attended with the remarkable blessing of God—This is a great and glorious work.

Finally, agreeable to our profession of the divine original and excellency of the Gospel, we ought to hold fast the form of sound words, which it has given us, even "the words of eternal life," and maintain our faith and hope in it, steadfast unto the end, that by its power and efficacy, forming us to a divine temper, we may in due time, by faith and patience, have a part with them who inherit the promises.

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